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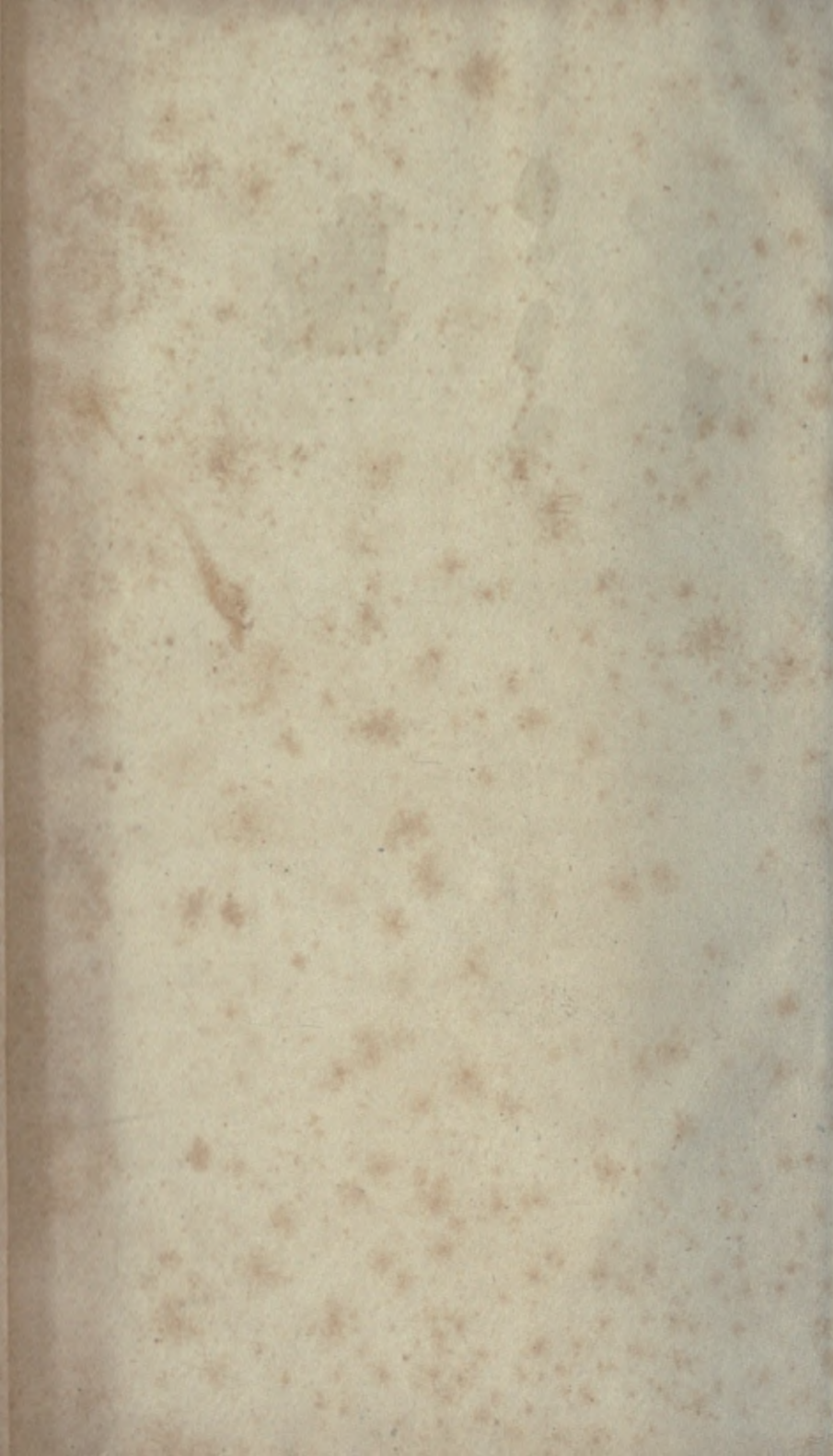


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THE

HISTORY

OF THE

CHURCH OF CHRIST.

BY THE LATE

REV. JOSEPH MILNER, A. M.

With Additions and Corrections,

BY THE LATE

REV. ISAAC MILNER, D. D. F. R. S.

DEAN OF CARLISLE, AND PRESIDENT OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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INTRODUCTION

BY THE AUTHOR,

THE REV. JOSEPH MILNER, M.A.

IN my Proposals for printing this HISTORY of the CHURCH of CHRIST, I promised "an Ecclesiastical History on a new Plan." The Reader therefore will naturally expect some distinct account of a Plan, which in a subject so generally known, lays claim to novelty, in order that he may judge for himself whether it appears sufficiently interesting to engage his perusal of the Work itself.

It is certain that, from our Saviour's time to the present, there have ever been persons whose dispositions and lives have been formed by the rules of the New Testament; men who have been REAL, not merely NOMINAL Christians: who believed the doctrines of the Gospel, loved them because of their divine excellency, and suffered gladly the LOSS OF ALL THINGS, THAT THEY MIGHT WIN CHRIST, AND BE FOUND IN HIM.* It is the history of these men which I propose to write. It is of no consequence with respect to my plan, nor of much importance, I believe, in its own nature, to what EXTERNAL Church they belonged. I intend not to enter with any nicety into any account of their rites and ceremonies, or forms of Church government, much less into their secular history. Even RELIGIOUS CONTROVERSIES shall be omitted; except those which seem to bear a relation to the essence of Christ's religion, and of which the history of his real Church requires some account. Let not the Reader expect that the actions of great men—great in a secular view I mean—will be exhibited to his notice. Nothing, but what appears to me to belong to Christ's kingdom, shall be admitted: genuine piety is the only thing which I intend to celebrate.

It must have struck a careful observer, that such a history is as yet a great DESIDERATUM. Enmity against the Gospel has been fed, even to satiety, by the large displays of ECCLESIASTICAL WICKEDNESS. The wildest and the most visionary heretics, have filled the historic page; and their follies, both in principle and practice, have been deemed worthy of a particular enumeration. The internal dissensions of Churches have been minutely described. The intricacies and intrigues of Popery, and indeed of every other secular system which pretends to wear a religious

* Philipp. iii. 8, 9.

garb, have been developed with a studious particularity: The connexion between the Church and the State has afforded very ample materials of what is commonly called Church History; and learning and philosophy have been much more respected than godliness and virtue.

No doubt, some more ancient voluminous Church Historians, as well as Mosheim in his *Compendium*, have given as much useful information; and if one might look on them as civil historians altogether, there would not be much room for blame. Further, if they had incorporated into their secular narratives an account of the progress of godliness itself, I should not have dared to reprehend them as Ecclesiastical Historians: But they evidently give a much larger proportion to the history of wickedness, than to that of piety in general. Hence the evils, which have been practised in Christian countries, seem even greater than they really were; and the disagreeable inference which the reading of Mosheim produced in my own mind is probably no singular case, viz.—that real religion appears scarcely to have had any existence. Infidel malice has triumphed, though very unreasonably, on account of these things; the vices of Christians, so called, have certainly been exaggerated on the whole; and Deists and Sceptics have taken advantage, partly from such exaggeration and partly from the poverty of our information concerning Mahometans and Pagans, to represent BOTH as more virtuous than Christians.

What account can be given of this unhappily partial view of Church History?—Genuine godliness is fond of secrecy: Humility is of its essence: She seeks not the praise of men but the praise of God; and hides even the good she does from the world more studiously than wickedness conceals its evils: Her sincerest votaries have, likewise, been chiefly private persons, such as have seldom moved in the public and noisy spheres of life. The most celebrated historians, who hitherto have appeared, seem not to have had so much relish for godliness, as to be induced to take any pains to draw her out of her modest obscurity.* The prevalence of wickedness in all ages has heightened the difficulty.† From these causes the scarcity of materials, for what properly deserves the name of Church History, is much greater than any person, who has not examined the subject, can even conceive. I have all along, however, to the best of my ability and opportunity, consulted original records, and have never contented myself with copying the sentiments of modern historians.

* Fox's *Book of Martyrs* is, however, one striking exception to this remark. The *Magdeburgensian Centuriators*, whom I did not meet with till I had finished this Volume, are likewise, in part, exempted from the charge of writing Ecclesiastical History in the secular manner which I have reprehended. Yet while they omit, or very lamely recount, some most important Christian facts, they relate with tedious exactness many uninteresting particulars. They seem, however, to have been men of real piety, industry, and learning, and may be of much use to me in subsequent parts of the history, should I continue it.

The volume of Mr. Newton is well known, and its merit has been acknowledged by men of piety and judgment. I once thought of beginning only where he ended. But as there is an unity of manner and style which belongs to every author who plans and executes for himself; and, as in some points I really found myself to differ in sentiment from this very respectable writer, I altered my opinion, contented in this place to acknowledge, that, so far as I can recollect, the perusal of his instructive volume of Ecclesiastical History first suggested to me the idea of this work.

† A history of the perversions and abuses of religion is not properly a history of the Church; as absurd were it to suppose a history of the highwaymen that have infested this country to be a history of England.

I hope I shall be allowed to call the plan, I propose, a proper one. Certainly, the terms "Church," and "Christian," do in their most NATURAL and PRIMARY SENSE respect only GOOD men. The Divine Founder of our religion has promised, THAT THE GATES OF HELL SHALL NOT PREVAIL AGAINST IT. Such a succession of pious men in all ages must, therefore, have existed; and it will be no contemptible use of such a history as this, if it prove, that, in every age, there have been REAL followers of Christ. Other uses cannot fail to offer themselves. To see and trace the goodness of God taking care of his Church in every age by his Providence and Grace, will be, to the devout mind, a refreshment of the most grateful nature. The honour of Christianity will be supported; the value of its essential doctrines will be ascertained; and we shall have frequent occasion to state what the Gospel is, and what it is not. Hence the triumphs of the Sceptic will appear to be unfounded in truth; when it shall be evident on the whole,—that Christ's religion has ever existed, and brought forth its proper fruits, to which no other system can make any just pretension; and finally,—that the evils of which Christians, so called, have been guilty, arose not from the Gospel itself, but from the hypocrisy of those who assumed that worthy Name, to which neither their faith nor their practice gave them any right.

These, and other obvious advantages of such a history, have determined me to attempt it. I feel oppressed with the greatness of the subject: Nevertheless, with God's help, I mean to proceed. IN MAGNIS VOLUISSE SAT EST.

I have two things further to promise: 1st, to assure the Reader that I shall think it my indispensable duty to give him real facts; and, if I be sometimes rather more copious in reflections than the severe laws of history allow, he will do well to observe, that the fashionable misrepresentations of ancient story require considerable attention.

And, 2dly, I fairly warn the Reader not to expect from me any indulgence in the modern taste of Scepticism. I shall not affect to doubt the credibility of ancient respectable historians. And, as it is hardly possible to avoid altogether the infection of the age in which one lives, I seem to myself sufficiently secured, by the torrent of prevailing opinions, from the other extreme of superstitious belief. Both ought to be avoided: but that, which supports itself by the appearance of extraordinary sense, by the authority of great names, and by the love of applause, must of course be the more ensnaring. The present age, in matters of religion, may justly be called the age of self-sufficiency: We condemn the ancients by wholesale, and without giving them a hearing: we suspect their historical accounts, without discrimination: malevolence and profaneness are both encouraged by such conduct: we fancy ourselves so ENLIGHTENED, as to be without any parallels in discernment: we are amazed, that our ancestors should so long have been deluded by absurdities; and, we are very little aware how much some future age will pity and blame us, for follies, of which we imagine ourselves perfectly clear.

J. M.

[NOTE TO THE EDITION OF 1810.]

THE Editor* takes this opportunity of most gratefully acknowledging the liberal patronage of the University of Cambridge, in having printed at their own expense four volumes of Mr. M.'s Ecclesiastical History. Their kindness and consideration in this matter makes an indelible impression on his mind: and, if any thing could increase his affectionate attachment to that learned Body, after so long and active a residence among them, it would be this honourable token of respect to the memory of his deceased Brother, who himself, many years ago, as a Student in the same Seminary,† received distinguished marks of approbation.

* The Rev. *Isaac Milner*, D.D., Dean of Carlisle, and President of Queen's College, Cambridge.

† Mr. M. took his degree of B. A. in the year 1766; and obtained, as a prize, one of the Chancellor's gold medals. The candidates were uncommonly numerous and able.

N. B.—Two handsome gold medals are given annually by the Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, to such Bachelors of Arts as excel in classical learning.

PREFACE
TO THE SECOND VOLUME,*
AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED,
BY THE REV. JOSEPH MILNER, M. A.

THE period of time, which the Volume now presented to the Reader embraces, will exhibit the Church of Christ in a very different situation from any in which it appeared, during the whole course of the three first Centuries.

The fourth Century opens with a persecution more systematically planned, and more artfully conducted, than those which Christians had ever known. Indeed victory at first showed itself in favour of the persecutors, and Christianity seemed to be near an end. All the powers of cruelty and artifice, and of violence and calumny, associated, were exerted to the utmost in the course of these transactions; and, if the Church still survived the storm, and rose more terrible from her losses, the only reason was, because her DEFENDER is invincible.

We next behold the Church established and protected by civil polity, and the whole system of Paganism, which had been the pride of ages, gradually dissolved, and sinking into insignificance and contempt. The advantages and abuses, attendant on Christian Establishments, display themselves, on this occasion, in a very conspicuous point of view. I have endeavoured, with faithfulness and candour, to point out both; at the same time that the regard due to truth itself, and to the characters of the most illustrious and the most exemplary Christians in past ages, seemed to require a defence of Ecclesiastical Establishments. I hope no real lover of truth and liberty will censure the attempt: for it must be owned, that the most direct attacks, in the way of argument, and I wish I could say only in that way, have repeatedly been made against them, as if they were unchristian in their whole nature. It cannot, therefore, be reckoned unfair to desire men, freely to give to others the liberty which they allow to themselves, if they would prove that their love of liberty is genuine and sincere.

The Arian controversy nearly fills the rest of the Century; it was my duty to give a faithful history of its rise, progress, and effects. And, if the personal character of Arians appear more criminal than many of my readers have been taught to imagine, I confidently refer them to the most authentic records of antiquity. I am not conscious of having disguised any one fact, or exaggerated any one enormity.

But it is with far greater pleasure, that I have contemplated the fifth Cen-

* Centuries IV., V., from p. 256 to p. 485, Vol. I. of this edition.

tury. The history of Pelagianism I judged to be a desideratum in our language; it was necessary to lay it before the reader with some degree of circumstantial exactness, supported too by incontestible documents. If the account of the writings and labours of Augustine be thought to extend to an immoderate length, I can only say, that the importance of the doctrines of GRACE, with their practical effects, will, perhaps, be considered as a sufficient apology. Nothing can be introduced more pertinent to the whole design of this History, than the revival of religion, of which he was the providential instrument: its effects remained for many centuries: and I scarcely need say to those, who have read the former Volume even with superficial attention, that my plan often requires me to be brief, where other historians are immoderately tedious; and to be circumstantial, where they say little, or are silent altogether.

To search out the real Church from age to age, is indeed a work of much labour and difficulty; far more so, I apprehend, than can even be conceived by those whose studies have never been directed to this object. The ore is precious, but it must be extracted from incredible heaps of heterogeneous matter. I cannot pretend to be clear of mistakes; but it behooved me to be as careful as I could; and I shall thankfully receive information or correction from studious persons who have carefully investigated antiquity for themselves. I cannot, indeed, expect information or correction from self-created critics, who are carried down the torrent of modern prejudices, and who know no sentiments, but those which they have imbibed from Authors of the present Century.

The encouragement which I have received from a generous Public induces me to persevere. Besides, the peculiar advantage of a work of this kind is, that it is capable of perfection, so far as it proceeds, without needing any support from subsequent parts. It is not like a connected thread of argumentation, which must be read throughout, before the full force of any particular portion of it be discerned.

What real Christianity is, I mean to exhibit historically; and, in the execution of this plan, I hope I shall be found not altogether to have disappointed the expectations of the University of Cambridge. I reflect with peculiar satisfaction, that the University, to which I am now so much indebted for liberal support in the publication of this Work, and in which several of my earlier years were spent in useful studies, was, under Divine Providence, the principal instrument,* of spreading through these kingdoms at the Reformation, that very light of Evangelical doctrine, which it is the capital object of this History to explore.

* See Burnet's History of the Reformation, and Strype's Lives of the Archbishops, *passim*.

PREFACE

TO THE THIRD VOLUME,*

AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED,

BY THE REV. JOSEPH MILNER, M.A.

If the real Church Historian find it a difficult task to extract a connected view of his peculiar subject from the Ecclesiastical materials of the fourth and fifth Centuries, that difficulty is multiplied a hundredfold, while he labours through the long and gloomy period, which in the present Volume engages his attention.

Impressed, however, with the certain truth of the declaration made by the Divine Author of Christianity, "that the gates of hell shall never prevail against his Church," I have endeavoured all along to discover her actual existence. How far I have succeeded, the Reader must determine for himself. If the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel have not been exhibited, both as professed in various parts of the world, and as productive of those fruits of holiness, which are peculiarly Christian, my aim has been missed, and the grand design of the whole narration has failed. But I hope the Scriptural Reader will see the lineaments of the Church pervading these dark Centuries: provided that he divest himself of all partial regards for sects and denominations, ages and countries, and attend exclusively to the remarks and evidences of genuine Christianity. This is the right frame of spirit, which the subject before us requires; and it is what I have steadily endeavoured to preserve.

Tros Rutulave fust nullo discrimine habebō.

In the former part of the Volume, Gregory I. of Rome, and the English Christians, will be found objects deserving our serious attention. Nor should we be prejudiced against the real Church, because she then wore a Roman garb. Undoubtedly she was by this means much defiled with superstition; for that was as much the predominant evil of those times, as profaneness is of our own. The last-mentioned evil admits of no coalition with Christian holiness; but superstition, to a certain degree, may co-exist with the spirit of the Gospel. When that degree is exceeded, and general idolatry takes place, the system then becomes too corrupt to deserve the name of the Church of Christ. I have marked this limit to the best of my judgment in the course of this History, have exhibited the **MAN OF SIN**

* Centuries VI., VII., VIII., IX., X., XI., XII., XIII., Vol. I., from p. 486 to the end; and Vol. II., from p. 1 to 103 of this edition.

matured in all his gigantic horrors, and from that epocha I despair of discovering the Church in the collective body of nominal Christians. Every Reader will observe the various features of Antichrist described in this Volume, and some may perhaps be enabled to form a more distinct and adequate conception of the nature of Popery, than they had before acquired.

Leaving therefore the general Church of Rome, after she had entirely ceased to **HOLD THE HEAD**, I either travel with faithful Missionaries into regions of heathenism, and describe the propagation of the Gospel in scenes altogether new, or dwell with circumstantial exactness on the lives and writings of some particular individuals, in whom the Spirit of God maintained the power of godliness, while they remained "in Babylon." The former object displays one of the brightest prospects of this whole period, and seems to rebuke the supineness of modern times, in regard to the extension of divine truth among Pagan nations. The latter, I trust, will be found to afford matter of Christian instruction. The pleasure and benefit, which, as I have repeatedly heard, has been derived from the perusal of Augustine's Life and Confessions, in the preceding Volume, encourage me to expect, that the review of the lives and writings of Anselm and of Bernard in this, may not be without similar fruit.

The History of these seven Centuries, as it has hither appeared in our common Ecclesiastical narratives, it must be confessed, is extremely uninteresting. If I have had some advantages for enlivening and illuminating the scene, let those be ascribed to the peculiar nature of my plan.

The account of the **WALDENSES**, which closes the Volume, belongs not to the Thirteenth Century exclusively; it is, however, ascribed to it, because in the course of that Century most extraordinary persecutions and conflicts took place among this people, and particularly excited the attention of Europe. It was also judged proper to give one unbroken narrative of Waldensian transactions in Ecclesiastical matters, till the time of the Reformation.

If the Reader learn some practical lessons concerning the power, wisdom, goodness, and faithfulness of God, from the review of the events which lie before him, I shall have reason to rejoice, nor shall I think my labour to have been in vain.

PREFACE

TO THE FOURTH VOLUME,*

AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED,

BY THE REV. ISAAC MILNER, D. D.

THE Editor has no doubt but the subject-matter of this Volume will afford abundant satisfaction to the Christian Reader. Almost every page is replete both with instruction and entertainment; and what certainly distinguishes this History through a very large portion of it,—that portion, which peculiarly entitles it to the name of the History of the Church of Christ,—is of such a nature as not to have found its way into our ordinary Ecclesiastical histories. The learned Reader, when he has perused this book, can scarcely fail to exclaim, How little notice, in general, has been taken of the genuine religious principles and practice of the bishops Grosseteste and Bradwardine! How are the very best parts of the character of Wickliff almost consigned to oblivion! What defective and erroneous notions of John Huss, and Jerom of Prague, are inculcated by authors who have attempted to abstract and condense the proceedings of the Council of Constance; and lastly, how little acquainted are even many studious and well-informed persons with the religious part of the character of Martin Luther!

Perhaps few men have been more exposed than this celebrated German, to the extremes of calumny and panegyric. Ecclesiastical histories are full, not only of discordant sentiments relative to his proceedings, but also of contradictory statements of the facts. His bold and enterprising genius, his firm and intrepid temper, and above all, his persevering spirit of inquiry, continue to be the admiration of every Protestant; while those of the papal persuasion have endeavoured to load his memory with charges, which at first originated in chagrin and hatred, and have been kept alive by bigotry and superstition. The infidel writers, who usually affect extraordinary moderation in every thing but religious concerns, have rashly followed the Papists in questioning the purity of the Reformer's motives. Nobody is surprised at this. But it may well seem a wonderful, as it is truly an affecting circumstance, that, in our enlightened times, many should be found, who, though they have not only never renounced Christianity, but even profess themselves sincere friends of the Reformation,—yet appear to understand very little of the real dispositions of Luther. Some of his natural qualities have been the subject of much observation; but the ruling principles of the man, those principles which were eminently spiritual and christian, are almost buried in silence.

* Centuries XIII., XIV., XV., XVI., from p. 103 to p. 322, Vol. II. of this edition.

There would be little room left for controversy respecting this extraordinary personage, if men would turn their attention to the investigation of his private conduct and secret motives, and would accustom themselves to estimate characters by scriptural rules. Happily, the authentic documents for this purpose,—though by no means so plentiful, in some of the earlier years of his life, as might be wished,—are yet, in the main, sufficiently clear and numerous. They establish, beyond dispute, the singular purity and disinterested integrity of Luther. And one may venture to affirm, that if the refined, philosophical taste of our historians, as well as of the age in which they live, would have allowed them to produce and digest the unexceptionable evidence which actually exists, much juster notions concerning the Saxon Reformer and his proceedings would have been entertained by students of history, than they can now possibly deduce from reading several of our best writers. The defects of their performances have not arisen from the want of ability, or of industry, or of learning. Such an insinuation would argue the highest degree of presumption in the Editor. It is his sincere belief that several historical productions of modern times might challenge, almost in any point of comparison, the most celebrated pieces of antiquity. It is to the neglect of observing, investigating, and illustrating the operations of the genuine principles of the GOSPEL, that the deficiencies here spoken of are perhaps entirely to be ascribed. The Editor deprecates the charge of censorious criticism, and submits to the judgment of impartial and intelligent readers for a candid construction of his meaning, while, with much grief, he suggests to their consideration,—Whether some of our ablest historians have not discovered much more anxiety to enumerate the various political and subordinate causes of the Reformation, than to trace diligently, and mark distinctly, the powerful energy of the essential doctrines of Christianity, as, through the gracious assistance of the Holy Spirit of God, they efficaciously influenced the conduct of the first Reformers? Should this question be answered in the affirmative, it may then be worth while to inquire further,—Whether this UNPHILOSOPHICAL, as well as unchristian neglect of the operation of Gospel principles on the minds of men who have been distinguished as the chief instruments of Providence in bringing about important ecclesiastical revolutions, does not arise from an acquiescence at least in the irreligious taste of the times, if not from the actual contagion of modern scepticism and infidelity. For in seasons of great departure from sound doctrine, when men are apt to be ashamed of the “Son of Man and his words,” it requires much courage and piety to be an open and faithful defender of the truth. Also, when the Gospel itself is perpetually assailed under the specious pretence of modest doubt and inquiry, the very best disposed persons have need to be constantly watchful, lest their own minds should imperceptibly be infected with the hostile insinuations of artful enemies of Revelation. It should seem that no writers are in this respect more dangerous, than those learned and able historians of a philosophical stamp, with whom FAME is avowedly the motive and the reward of their labours.*

But it will be said, that the niceties of controversial divinity, are not the proper province either of the polite or of the profound historian. Be it so: Yet surely it must be granted, that the investigation of men’s GENERAL principles of conduct, must be of singular service towards discovering their

* Fame is the motive, it is the reward of our labours;—GIBSON, *Miscell.* Vol. II.

real motives in particular transactions. If, for example, in the case of Martin Luther, it be an undoubted fact, that during all the important scenes in which he was so providentially called to be a principal actor, the peculiar truths of the Gospel were powerfully and practically influential on his mind; then it will follow that the motives of that great Reformer cannot be explained or comprehended without specially adverting to those truths, and diligently weighing their effects in the production of human actions, according to the direction of the Holy Scriptures, "By their fruits ye shall know them."—A due attention to these things surely ought not to be confounded with an improper or an objectionable regard to theological niceties.

Indeed, if the writers of Ecclesiastical histories have not themselves also some practical, experimental knowledge of the nature of pure Christianity, as well as theoretical and speculative notions concerning it, they must for ever be embarrassed in contemplating the conduct of good men; and the more they aspire to what is called the philosophy of history,—that is, the more they affect to develop general principles, to form abstract systems, and to unfold the secret motives of men's hearts, the worse guides will they become to their unbiassed, unsuspecting readers, and the more likely to mislead and prejudice their minds.

The histories of Luther and of Lutheranism are so intimately mixed with secular politics, and so pregnant with revolutions of the greatest consequence to kingdoms and empires, that, however little disposed the modern historians may have been to trace the existence of the true Church of Christ, or record the effects of the operation of pure Christian principles, they have found it impossible not to give considerable attention to the transactions of the Saxon Reformer and his associates. In fact, the civil and religious liberties of mankind have been found to be closely connected together in practice; and it is this circumstance, which, in a great measure, has contributed to the celebrity of Luther and other German theologians.

No person could have a greater esteem for Luther than the Author of this History. The present volume will show how well versed he was in his writings, and with how much care he had studied his character. He loved him as a man of plain dealing and unfeigned piety: he admired him as a champion of truth: he revered him as an instrument of God, highly honoured and expressly chosen for the purpose of defending and propagating the Christian faith; and he contemplated his success with delight and astonishment. But the more thoroughly he had penetrated the secret thoughts of the Reformer, the more deeply was our Author's spirit affected on account of the MANNER in which he saw the righteous views and motives of this excellent man transmitted to posterity by the ablest modern historians. That manner, to say the best of it, he considered as extremely imperfect in general, and frequently dangerous and illusory. Most of these writers appeared to him to employ their chief strength concerning SECONDARY causes, and some of them evidently with an evil design against Christianity: whereas the devout mind of the Author of this History of the Church of Christ, saw the FINGER OF GOD in every step of the Reformation. With his favourite Luther, he altogether agreed that the real distemper of the Church, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, was CORRUPTION OF EVANGELICAL DOCTRINE. It was but gradually that the Saxon Reformer saw this melancholy truth; but when his eyes were once fairly opened to the nature of the evil, he never more lost sight of it; and he exerted every nerve in administering the specific medicine. It grieved Mr. JOSEPH MILNER, not a

little, to see how this very important matter is almost entirely overlooked by historians. He considered the thing not merely as an injury done to the memory of an eminent servant of God, but as an infallible symptom of the decay, at least among the learned, of religious knowledge and religious taste.

Unbelievers and sceptics do their utmost in every way to exclude God and his Christ from being supposed to exercise any superintending influence over those great events which prove favourable to the propagation and establishment of pure religion; and when, for private reasons, they do not choose to speak plainly, they usually shelter themselves under equivocal and ironical expressions; and try to wound the Gospel of Jesus by depreciating his most distinguished servants. Thus, pride, opposition, singularity, self-interest, ambition, enthusiasm, have been insinuated to the unsuspecting minds of many readers, as the ruling motives of the Saxon Reformer.

The Writer, in the management of this part of his History of the Church, has endeavoured to rescue the memory of Luther from unjust aspersions of every kind; and he does this, not by **INDECISIVE** effusions of praise and censure, or of affected candour and concession, but by a scriptural display of the nature of the new creature in Christ Jesus, as exemplified in the conduct of this eminent Theologian. The former method might have ensured to him the commendation of modern critics, but the latter only could be admitted into a History which has for its single object the celebration of the honour of the Divine Government, as made manifest in the conversion of sinners and the extension of the kingdom of Christ.

The Reader will however observe, that his Historian is not blind either to the excellencies or to the faults of Luther, considered as a natural* man. But he must keep in mind, that the Writer's **CHIEF** business with the Reformer consisted in exhibiting the operation of his genuine Christian principles. The German theologian, in the Author's views, was a distinguished subject of Almighty grace, which, by enlightening his understanding, changing his affections, and animating his hopes, prepared him in a most wonderful manner, for the extraordinary part he was appointed to sustain. When the intelligent Reader shall have perused this portion of the sixteenth century, he will be a better judge of the Author's penetration, and of the soundness and impartiality of his conclusions.

Mr. JOSEPH MILNER, in his Introduction to the First Volume of this History, complains of the Ecclesiastical historians, "That they had developed, with a studious particularity, the intricacies and intrigues of Popery; that the connexion between the Church and State had afforded very ample materials of what is commonly called Church-history; but that learning and philosophy had been much more respected than Godliness and virtue." A treatment of this sort was to be expected from Deistical historians; but that the same lamentable truth should be exemplified in the writings of those who believe Christianity, and are bound to support its cause, is discouraging and vexatious in the highest degree. The fact, however, is not to be denied; it is not to be denied, for example, that Luther's practical interpretation of the scriptural doctrines of the salvation of mankind, as well as his arguments against the reigning corruptions of the same doctrines, scarcely appear at all in modern descriptions of the reformation of the church. The

Editor is at a loss to assign any other causes for the omission, than those already mentioned in this Preface, namely, the contagion of the times, and the actual decay of a religious taste. Men learn not only to undervalue, but absolutely to overlook the very existence and operation of the most precious Evangelical principles.

A short quotation from an elegant, and in general, a very accurate historian, will serve to illustrate the preceding reflections. He informs us, that "there was scarcely any opinion or practice of the Romish church, which Luther endeavoured to reform, but what had been previously animadverted upon by Erasmus, and had afforded him subject either of censure or railery."^a

To this assertion of the incomparable historian it would not be difficult to produce very considerable exceptions, were we disposed to examine separately those opinions and practices of the Papal system, which the rulers of that establishment considered as essential to the maintenance of the existing domination; but it is by no means the design of the Editor, in quoting this passage, to cavil at a general assertion, which in substance has often been made before, and which is true in the main, when taken in the sense the writer intended it to be understood. Dr. Robertson had his eye chiefly on the scandalous vices of the monks; the intrigues, avarice, and encroachments of the dignified clergy; and many abominable impieties and superstitions of the Romish church. And these, most certainly, had often afforded to Erasmus matter for satirical animadversion or sarcastical stricture, before they became the object of Luther's grief, indignation and remonstrance. So far therefore the sentiment of the quotation is supported by fact. But, neither before nor after the commencement of Luther's attack on the Roman Catholic opinions and practises, did Erasmus ever concur with him in the grand article of contention. It may be admitted, that he skirmished, as it were, and with great success, against many of the auxiliaries of Popery; but never once in his life did he look in the face what, according to Luther's judgment, was the real efficient enemy of Christ and his religion; never did he lay siege to the **STRONG-HOLDS OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS**. To pull down **THESE** with all his might was both the object and the practice of the Saxon Reformer. Erasmus said many excellent things, in an elegant way, concerning Christ and the Gospel, concerning piety, purity of life, Christian charity, meekness, and peaceable tempers. He exposed with great ability, and with exquisite humour—and it may truly be added, with much advantage to the Reformation—the ambition, covetousness, and luxurious excesses of the clergy. Luther, who cordially agreed with him in all these just animadversions, went to the root both of the Evil and of the Good. The depraved nature of man, he taught as the root of the evil; contrition and humility, with a lively faith in the Redeemer, as the only cure of the reigning evil, and the only source of **FUTURE GOOD**. While the former courted Popes and Cardinals, and temporized with them, **FASCYING** that Reformation of Ecclesiastical abuses might be brought about by mild and prudential **MANAGEMENT**; the latter refused to make **ANY SINFUL COMPROMISES**, boldly opposed all Anti-christian notions of the **MERIT OF WORKS**, defended the important doctrine of justification by faith, and committed his cause to God. The doctrine of justification by faith was the article, which, of all others, this great man had most at heart. If that were preserved, he conceived no-

thing could go materially wrong ; if that were lost, nothing would go right ; and in no great length of time he was convinced, that this fundamental doctrine could be established, ONLY on the RUINS of Popery.

The opinions of Erasmus and Luther on this subject were substantially different, and in some important views the reverse of each other. Erasmus, however, was so dexterous and wary a disputant, that it is no easy matter to say precisely what his sentiments were on this leading article of faith ; and to enlarge further in this place, either on the comparative excellencies or defects of these two great men, so celebrated in Ecclesiastical history, would be to anticipate a considerable portion of the contents of the Fourth and Fifth Volumes. These brief observations may be sufficient to show how inconsiderately our very best writers have sometimes expressed themselves concerning religious matters. Whether Martin Luther was, or was not, sound and rational in his expositions of the leading doctrines of Christianity, makes no part of the present question. The existing records demonstrate two things : first, the real nature of his theological creed ; and, secondly, that his religious sentiments in essential points, constituted the main spring both of his private and his public conduct : and therefore the omission of so important a part of Ecclesiastical information, especially by a reverend, learned, and philosophical historian, from whatever cause it may have proceeded, is not to be defended.

The quotation above mentioned, from Dr. Robertson, is but a single specimen of that sort of defective and erroneous representation of religious characters, which is to be found in numerous pages of modern histories, in other respects of deservedly great reputation. However, as it was the Plan of the Author of this History of the Church to illustrate the nature and efficacy of Christian principles, throughout different ages, by the conduct of good men,—those eminent servants of God, whose memories have most materially suffered from the treatment here alluded to, are regarded by him as having a strict claim to peculiar attention.

The Editor, in concluding, cannot but sincerely lament that the AUTHOR of this History had no opportunity of rendering his own performance more perfect, by revising his own manuscripts in a more finished state, exercising his judgment again upon the arrangement of the materials, and applying his last corrections to the composition. In that case, this volume might have been presented to the public with greater confidence ; and the Editor would most certainly have been freed, in various instances, from much doubt, trouble and uncertainty. In supplying deficiencies, he has constantly endeavoured to adhere as closely as possible to the general plan of the deceased Historian ; and he requests the candid Reader, if he should be disposed to censure the Fourth Volume as inferior in execution to the three former, to recollect that the deprivation of the finishing hand of the Author is an irreparable loss.

The Editor had once designed to distinguish the original Manuscripts from every addition that has been made to them ; and this, no doubt, would have been the most effectual way to secure the reputation of their Author. But, he found it almost impossible to proceed upon that system ; In many instances, the sentences of Mr. JOSEPH MILNER were left so abrupt and unfinished, and the references to the authorities so general, ambiguous, and indecisive, that he has often been compelled to mix, according to the best of his judgment, both his own matter and expression with the original materials of the Historian.

In these Memoirs uncommon pains are taken with the affairs of Luther, especially during the first years of the wonderful exertions of this great Reformer. To furnish the Reader with solid and luminous information, concerning the interesting transactions of that memorable period, and at the same time to compress the narrative into a moderate compass, was no easy task.—Those, who are best acquainted with the original documents of the times, will be the most competent judges of the execution of this part of the work.

Such as it is,—the Author, in composing it, certainly believed himself to be employed in the service of his Heavenly Master; and, in the humble hope of His blessing and protection, it is now committed to the judgment of candid and impartial readers.

The Fifth Volume will be crowded still more than the fourth, with surprising and important matter. Great events rapidly succeed one another during all the former part of the sixteenth century; and great Actors appear on the stage. Erasmus lived till the year 1536; and it pleased a kind Providence to continue the inestimable lives of Luther and Melancthon some years longer; and also to raise up many other Worthies, who should contend for Christian truth and Christian liberty with wisdom and courage. On the contrary, the powers of darkness summoned all their forces in determined opposition. Our Historian studiously exerts himself to mark the growth of Infant-Protestantism. It was his opinion, “that no scenes, since the Apostles’ days, were more instructive.”

[NOTA BENE TO THE EDITION OF 1810.]

To many Readers, no part of the book will, probably, be more interesting, than the matters contained in the Appendix.—Several things are placed there, which, it is thought, might too much interrupt the thread of the narrative; and many additions are made by the Editor, from sources which the Author had no opportunity of examining. It will, however, be very easy for any one, as he goes through the several Chapters of the History, always to peruse, if he chooses, the corresponding part of the Appendix.

In this Second Edition, some parts of the APPENDIX are introduced into the History; and the whole of the very interesting account of John Wes-selus of Groningen, is entirely new. The Editor had not seen the writings of this eminent divine when the first edition of this volume was published.

PREFACE
TO THE FIFTH VOLUME,*
AS ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED,
BY THE REV. ISAAC MILNER, D.D.

A FULL conviction, that in our times the principles and motives of LUTHER are not well understood, induced me to bring forward, in the preceding Volume, a number of authentic documents, which have been either entirely omitted, or imperfectly stated, by Historians. The approbation with which my endeavours to elucidate this part of Ecclesiastical history have been received, has encouraged me to spare no pains in attempting to place in its true light the character of the Saxon Reformer; and though the Reader may at first be surprised that a Volume of so many pages should bring down this History of the Church of Christ only to the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, I have no fear that, when he has perused the work, he will think either the writer prolix, or the matter unimportant.

A mere cursory inspection of the Volume will convince him, that every Chapter contains materials which distinguish this History from all others.

In order to communicate a full and faithful exhibition of facts, the Author has availed himself of all the means of information within his reach; and particularly of the curious and instructive contents of three quarto volumes of the Private Letters of Luther; two of which he in vain sought after, for several years, both in these Dominions and on the Continent.

The learned Dr. Mosheim, in his Compendium, refers to a long list of eminent Authors, who, he says, are to be consulted, in confirmation of his brief statements.† Now such an intimation appears to me, to have the effect of at once overwhelming the courage and resolution of any ordinary student of Ecclesiastical history.

The Historian of the CHURCH of CHRIST, in several instances of difficult and important inquiry, cannot exactly follow any one of the numerous Authors who have handled the points in question; and to have always detailed his reasons for dissent, would have swelled the Volume too much. He constantly, however, refers to the very pages where the best opinions and the original records are to be found; and then leaves it to his Reader to judge how far he has made legitimate use of the collective evidence. And though this may not be the best way of sheltering himself from the detection of erroneous judgment, or of mis-statement of facts, it certainly

* Century XVI.. Vol. II. p. 322, to the end.

† Laur. Mosh. *Historia Reform.* p. 646.

contributes to the discovery of truth, by rendering future examination and criticism more easy and agreeable.

Add, that a strict and continued attention to the opinions of contemporary writers, and, whenever they can be procured, to original documents, requires great labour and perseverance; as any one may soon convince himself, who will take the trouble, only in one or two cases, to turn to the numerous passages referred to in this Volume. The writer has no scruple to affirm that he could have finished the Volume in one-fourth of the time, had he contented himself with less accurate investigations; had he ventured to give general and bold representations of things, and guarded these afterwards (as is often done) by sceptical concessions and plausible conjectures, which, while they save the time and trouble of patient research, serve rather to perplex than to unfold the truth; and all this under great appearances of candour and impartiality.

True candour consists in forming just decisions upon evidences collected with diligence and judgment. It never tempts a man to descant, with specious parade, on liberality and moderation, to depress or dilute virtues, to lessen or palliate vices, and to say and unsay, till all manly and worthy sentiments are utterly lost in a confusion of opposite or incongruous assertions.

The modern taste, I fear, too much encourages a tendency to FALSE candour.

Some Authors of eminence, make no mention of their authorities; and much may be said for this practice. Perhaps it is preferable to a vague and general reference. My experience entirely agrees with that of the late Mr. C. J. Fox, who says, he found it one of his greatest difficulties to discover the authorities upon which Historians advance their facts.* To this day, notwithstanding the general reference of Dr. Mosheim, I search in vain for the grounds of several of his most positive assertions.

The Preface to the Fourth Volume might supersede the necessity of further remark. But as the times are awful, and as questions concerning the nature of the Roman Catholic Religion are revived, it may be useful to observe, that they who wish to acquire a thorough knowledge of what Popery was, will do well to study carefully the history of the first twelve or thirteen years of the Lutheran opposition to the established hierarchy. By this PRACTICAL method, they will find the mysteries of the papacy more effectually unveiled, than by any formal or THEORETICAL description of that Antichristian system. It is by a view of our Romish Adversary's conflicts with the Founders of Protestantism, that we become best acquainted with his cruel and despotic designs, his contemptible artifices, and his ridiculous superstitions.

Several persons, and even some of our leading Senators, suppose that Popery has long since been abundantly meliorated. But I wish they may not be nearer the truth, who think that the spirit of Protestantism has sadly degenerated. Both these points may receive much illustration from that part of this History which is yet unfinished. In the mean time, the true nature and character of Protestantism, as well as of Popery, ought to be carefully examined, and ascertained with all possible accuracy. And for this purpose, the diligent study of the same memorable period, and especially of the first eight years of it, namely, from 1517 to 1525, will be

found peculiarly useful. During these years, Luther stood almost alone; and the documents contained in this and the preceding Volume will leave no doubt on the mind of the inquisitive Reader as to the real motives by which he was actuated. Then the doctrines of Luther are well known to be, in the main, the doctrines of every branch of the Protestant Reformation. These, with the rapidity of lightning, penetrated almost every part of Europe; became the fruitful source of various Christian institutions and establishments; and, as hitherto they were supported rather by the blood of the martyrs, than the power of princes and prelates, they beautifully exhibit the native vigour of the reviving Church of Christ.*

Doubtless, in describing thus at length the interesting scenes which immediately led to our blessed deliverance from papal darkness and iniquity, the Historian's progress through the sixteenth century is inevitably retarded; but it should be remembered, that he is in no degree deviating from the original plan of the work; and that he is hereby laying a good foundation for brevity, precision and perspicuity, in the continuation of the History.

* Com. de Luth. Præloq.

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CENTURY I.

A SUMMARY VIEW OF THE CHURCH,

SO FAR AS IT MAY BE COLLECTED FROM THE SCRIPTURE.

CHAPTER I.

JERUSALEM.

THAT "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of Jesus Christ, beginning at Jerusalem,"* is a passage of Scripture, which at once points out what the Christian Religion is, and where we may look for its beginning and for its character. We are to describe the rise of a dispensation the most glorious to God, and the most beneficent to man. Christianity found mankind in an universal state of sin and misery. In Judea alone something of the worship of the true God existed. The forms of the Mosaic economy subsisted, but were greatly obscured and corrupted with Pharisaic traditions and Sadducean profaneness. The ancient people of God had defiled themselves with heathen profligacy: and, though there wanted not a multitude of teachers among them, yet, when He who knew what was in man, saw the spiritual condition of this people, "he was moved with compassion toward them, because they fainted, and were as sheep without a shepherd." Certainly they were in possession of a degree at least of moral information, though it was extremely defective, and, in many points of view, fundamentally erroneous. But, of that knowledge which relates to repentance and remission of sins, they were totally destitute. Notwithstanding the light of the Old Testament, the provision of sacrifices, the declaration of so many prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the examples of so many holy men, who, in that dark and preparatory dispensation, had learned to fear God, and to believe in his promises of grace, it does not ap-

pear that the body of the Jewish nation were, in their religious state, materially better than the rest of the world. That men needed such a change of disposition as in Scripture is expressed by the term *metempsychosis*, that they must become new creatures, and receive the forgiveness of sins by faith in the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, were ideas unknown in Judea:—if indeed we except the dim light which visited the souls of Zacharias, of Simeon, of Anna, and of a few other devout persons, who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Such was the dismal night, in which the Sun of Righteousness made his appearance in the world. Scarcely in any age had ignorance and wickedness a more general prevalence. The history of Josephus evinces this. This author dwells chiefly indeed on public and political affairs; yet he throws a sufficient light on the manners of the times, and shows, that the extreme impiety and profligacy of the Herodian princes, were but too faithfully transcribed into the lives of their subjects. There had been periods of Jewish story more favourable to godliness: for instance, the age of Joshua, of David, of Ezra, and of Nehemiah. For some persons there ever were who, at least, implicitly rested on the God of Israel, and trusted in the Redeemer that was to come. But the darkest season was chosen for the exhibition of the Light of Life by him, "who hath put the times and seasons in his own power."

To know our own depravity and helplessness; and, by faith in Christ, to know "experimentally" the suitable and the efficacious cure, is doubtless the genuine secret of true piety. But wherever wickedness and profaneness have spread very generally, the knowledge of these doc-

* Luke xiv. 47.

trines is usually lost. Amidst a thousand disputes even on religious subjects, these are erased out of men's creed,—the very doctrines—which alone can be the means of freeing them from vice and folly. It was their ignorance of these things, which moved the Son of God to lament the uninformed condition of the Jews at that time. To dwell on the history of Christ himself is foreign to my design. Indeed a few souls were converted during His abode on earth: but the five hundred brethren, who saw him all at one time after his resurrection, seem to have made the sum total of his disciples. And it may further be observed, that all these, and the eleven sincere Apostles themselves, were possessed with notions of a temporal kingdom, the rock on which their countrymen fatally split in their expositions of the Scriptures relating to the expected Messiah; and that they had not yet learned, with any clearness and steadiness of apprehension, to set their affections on things above.

And now was the critical moment, when it pleased God to erect the first Christian

First effusion
of the
Spirit.

Church at Jerusalem. This was the first of those effusions of the Spirit of God,

which from age to age have visited the earth, since the coming of Christ, and prevented it from being quite overrun with ignorance and sin. It is an unspeakable advantage, that we have the sacred narrative to unfold this to our understandings. The want of such an advantage will appear too fully in the history of the succeeding EFFUSIONS* of the Divine Spirit. Our duty, however, is not to complain, but to be thankful. If we carefully attend to this first instance, it will serve as a specimen, by which to try other religious phenomena: and whether they lead to genuine piety or not, may generally be judged from their agreement or disagreement with this.

Let us then observe the circumstances in which this effusion of the Holy Spirit

was vouchsafed. As repentance and remission of sins were leading doctrines of Christ's religion, the most ample room had been made for them by the completion of his redemption. He had offered himself a sacrifice for the sins of men, "was risen" from the dead "for our justification," and in the sight of his disciples was just ascended up to heaven. That the Gospel, the good news for penitent sinners, the good news of reconciliation with God, should begin at Jerusalem, the scene of so much wickedness perpetrated, and of so much grace abused, was itself no mean argument of the riches of Divine Goodness, and was an illustrious exemplification of the grand purpose of the Gospel,—to justify the ungodly, and to quicken the dead. By the order of their Divine Master, the Apostles remained at Jerusalem, waiting for the promised Holy Spirit "which they had heard of him,"^a and abode in mutual charity, and in the fervent exercise of prayer and supplication. What the Holy Spirit was to do for them, they seemed little to understand; if one may conjecture from their last question to their Master, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" it is natural to apprehend, that they were feasting their imaginations with the delightful prospect of a splendid kingdom, attended with all the circumstances of external pomp and grandeur. Principalities and lordships were, in their fancy, soon to be assumed in the room of fishermen's nets and boats, and they pleased themselves with the notion of their Master's external dominion in the world. Not that they were without a genuine taste for something infinitely better. At any rate, they afford us a useful lesson;—"they continued in prayer and supplication." In every age, they who do so, shall doubtless understand, in God's due time, what the kingdom of heaven means, and find by happy experience that kingdom established in their own souls, even "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

During this interesting crisis, we do not find them employed in any other business than this of prayer, except in filling up the apostolical college of twelve, by the substitution of Matthias in the room of the unhappy Judas, who, for the love of a little gain of

Matthias substituted in the place of Judas Iscariot.

* In the term effusion there is not here included the idea of the miraculous or extraordinary operations of the Spirit of God, but only of such operations as he vouchsafes in every age to his church. The plan of this History has little connection with the former. It is, however, to be remembered, that a remarkable display of the Divine Grace, at some particular season, is always intended by the expressions EFFUSION of the Spirit of God, or EFFUSION of the Divine or Holy Spirit.

^a Acts i. 4.

this world, had unfitted himself for the riches of the next, and rendered himself unworthy to partake of the marvellous scene now about to be exhibited. Behold then the twelve Apostles, Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, Judas the brother of James, and Matthias, expecting and longing for the unspeakable blessings of true Christianity!

The Pentecost, one of the Jewish festivals, was the era of the Divine Visitation. The Apostles were all in harmony assembled together; when lo! suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. Their Master in his conference with Nicodemus,* had compared the operations of the Holy Spirit to the wind, and the sound from heaven on this occasion was a just emblem of the power of the Divine Influence now commencing. And there appeared "unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them;"† Another emblem no less just, which the Church of England uses in her hymn to the Holy Ghost in the ordination-office,

"Thy blessed unction from above,
Is comfort, life, and fire of love."

In truth they now found they were "baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire;"‡ And the effects in purifying their hearts, in enlightening their understandings, and in furnishing them with gifts, and zeal, and boldness, hitherto unknown, were very soon exhibited. They were all filled with the "Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Of the many miraculous gifts now imparted, this of tongues, at once so useful for the propagation of the Gospel, and so striking an attestation of its truth, first displayed itself to the amazement of a number of Jews, out of every nation under heaven, who heard these Galileans speak each in his own language. There is reason to believe, that, as many of them were devout men, they had been prepared by Divine Grace for the effectual reception of the Gospel, and that a considerable part of the first converts were of their body.

While many were expressing their admiration at this strange event, others,

whom we may suppose to have been chiefly the native Jews, who understood not these several languages, derided the Apostles as intoxicated with wine: and now the zeal of Peter was stirred up to preach both to those who admired, and to those who scorned. He begged them to have so much candour, as not rashly to suppose them to be men overcome with liquor, which the very time of the day rendered improbable, the third hour of the day, answering to our nine in the morning, when it should seem the Jews were rarely known to be in that situation. And as his audience professed a regard for the sacred oracles, he pointed out to them a remarkable prophecy, in the second chapter of Joel, then fulfilling, namely, the promise of an effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh, attended with dreadful punishments on those who should despise it:—yet that whoever, in the deep sense of his sinfulness and misery, should call on the name of the Lord, should be saved. He then shows them how God had fulfilled his own purposes in the death of Jesus, at the very time when they had been executing the dictates of their own malice. He proceeds to testify also of his resurrection, according to the testimony of David, in Psalms xvi. and cx., in both which Psalms it was evident, that not David himself, but Christ, was the subject of the prophecy. He openly declares that he himself and his brethren were witnesses of the resurrection of their Master, that he was exalted to heaven, and had received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost which he had now shed forth on the Apostles, and concerning which they now had the plain demonstration of their senses. The conclusion which he draws from this chain of argument, supported by the mutual strength of facts and prophecies, was this,—that the despised person whom they had thought unworthy to live, and had exposed to the most painful and ignominious death, was owned by the God of their fathers to be the Lord and Messiah, who was the expectation of the Jews, and through whom alone salvation was offered to sinful men.

The design of the whole sermon was evidently to produce conviction of sin in the hearers; and it pleased God to crown it with success. Multitudes were pricked in their hearts: they found themselves guilty of murdering the Christ of God;

* John iii. † Acts ii. ‡ Matt. iii. 11.

and so powerfully were they struck with a sense of their extreme unworthiness, that they found themselves also destitute of all resources in themselves. They cry to Peter and to the rest, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Similar indeed is the beginning of all true repentance, when men find themselves really lost, helpless, and willing to be led in any way which God shall please, because they have no ability in themselves, and "there is no health in them."* Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

Thus the doctrine of repentance and remission of sins, in the name of Jesus, began at Jerusalem. The people were called upon to "loath themselves for their past iniquities," and to give themselves up to God for an entire renovation of soul; and the Grace of God in Christ was offered to every one of them. The Apostle exhorted them all to receive this grace, by believing on Jesus for the remission of sins, with a submission to his ordinance of baptism as an emblem of washing away their sins; and he assured them, that God would receive them into his favour in this way: that however guilty they were, all their sins should be pardoned, as if they had never been committed; and the Holy Ghost should be poured on them also: for the promise of it was very general; to them, to their children, to the most distant lands, wherever God should call men to reconciliation by Jesus Christ. Thus did St. Peter convince his hearers of sin, and instruct them in the way of salvation.

They, whose hearts God had smitten with a sense of guilt, were consoled by the grace of forgiveness; and "with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word, were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls."

In this manner did the convictions and consolations of the Holy Ghost attend the first preaching of St. Peter. And this great multitude appear to have been fully

converted to Christianity: For they continued "steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Here we see the regular appearance of the first Christian Church. These men were not Christians in name only; they understood and believed the apostolical doctrine concerning repentance and remission of sins in the name of Jesus Christ: they continued united to the pastors whom God had made instruments of their conversion: they received constantly the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, in which they enjoyed real communion with their Saviour: and prayer was their daily employment and delight. Their holy boldness towards God, and their joyful sensation of forgiveness, were tempered with a godly fear. Every soul was possessed with this consistent mixture of holy joy and fear. They had felt the pangs of guilt: they had seen what a price was paid for their redemption: they "rejoiced with trembling," as men just escaped from the pit of destruction; and the same spirit which cried, Abba, Father,* in their hearts, taught them to reverence His justice and His holiness, to fear him, and to dread sin above all other evils. And though it does not appear to have been any injunction of the Apostles, that they should live together in a community of goods, and though experience soon taught the first Christians, that the general establishment and continuance of such a usage was impracticable, yet, doubtless, this practice for the present was a rare and convincing instance of mutual charity, and proved how soon the operations of Divine Grace had loosened their minds from the love of this world. They "sold their goods and possessions, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." In this happy frame of mind they spent much of their time in the temple, and in discharging the mutual offices of social kindness: even their bodily food was received with a gladness before unknown. The Grace of God gave a pleasant tincture to every object with which they conversed; and while they extolled it with their hearts and lips, they, as yet, found favour with all the people. The natural enmity of the heart against the Gospel of Christ did not at first show itself, and the purity of their lives could not but recommend

First
Christian
Church.

* The Church of England Confession.

* Galatians iv. 6.

them to the esteem of others. "The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." Thus plainly St. Luke intimates whose grace it was that effected all this, and that his hand, in the Divine Effusion here described, ought ever to be acknowledged.

A miracle wrought soon after by Peter and John on a lame man, a well-known beggar above forty years old, gave a farther attestation to their Divine authority. Peter was hence led to preach* to the admiring multitude, the same doctrine of repentance and remission, and thus he exalted the Lord Jesus as the Holy One, and the Just, and the Prince of Life, to whom they had wickedly preferred even a murderer, Barabbas. He disclaims all merit in himself or in his colleagues in the miracle: he shows that God had glorified his Son Jesus; and that it was through faith in his name, that the act had been performed. He charitably alleges their ignorance, as the only possible alleviation of their guilt; and which indeed alone prevented it from being unpardonable. He exhorts them to repentance and conversion, and lays open to their view the prospect, not of a temporal, but of a spiritual kingdom; in the hope of which they were to rejoice, and patiently bear the afflictions of this present life: he warns them at the same time of the threats denounced by Moses against the despisers of the Messiah, through whom alone salvation was offered to all nations, though the first invitation was addressed to the Jews.

The Church was now increased to five thousand; and the signal for persecution was raised by the magistrates of Jerusalem, many of whom were Sadducees, enemies to the doctrine of a resurrection, and, in truth, to every thing that had any tendency to raise men's minds above the world. The two Apostles were imprisoned that evening, but their examination was deferred till the next day. The high priest, and the persons of greatest authority, looked on this matter as an occasion of sufficient consequence to require the calling of a solemn court. Peter to their interrogatories frankly answers, that the miracle had been "wrought in the name of Jesus, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead." He boldly rebukes them for their contempt of Him,

who is the only Saviour: For "there is none other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved."

The wisdom and boldness of two unlettered fishermen, who had been companions of Jesus, struck the court with astonishment. But finding no present opportunity of gratifying their malice, on account of the splendour of the miracle, they dismissed them with a strict charge to be silent in future concerning the name of Jesus, though the Apostles ingenuously confessed their inability to comply with such an order, because, "they must obey God rather than men."

The Apostles returned to their company,* and reporting the threats of the magistrates, they all, with united supplication, intreated the Lord to grant them boldness to persevere, notwithstanding the menaces of His and their enemies. They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and enabled to proceed with calm intrepidity.

The most perfect unanimity as yet prevailed among the Christians; and they not only professed to have all things common, but also practised the rule accordingly with the greatest cheerfulness. Divine Grace was largely diffused among them. The poor lacked nothing: the richer brethren converted their possessions into money, and left the distribution of the whole to the discretion of the Apostles. And, in this liberality, Barnabas of Cyprus, a Levite, who had lands of his own, most probably in his native country, was eminently distinguished.

It appeared very manifest, that the Apostles enjoyed much more of the power of Christ's religion than they had ever done while their Master was with them on earth. Such was the effect of the effusions of the Spirit. We hear no more of their dreams concerning a temporal kingdom. The courage of Peter in confronting the magistrates, forms a perfect contrast to his timidity in denying his Master. Wherever the same repentance, faith, hope, charity, heavenly-mindedness appear, **there is true Christianity**; and there also the enmity of the world will be excited. Of this, something has already discovered itself, and more is now calling for our attention, as well as something much more grievous,—the detection of hypocrisy in certain professors of Christianity.

* Acts iii.

* Acts iv.

The case of Judas had already prepared the Church to expect the appearance of tares among the wheat; and our Lord's parable alluded to, had assured them of it. Yet when such things occur, good men are often too much surprised, and the wicked unreasonably triumph. There was one Ananias among the disciples, whose conscience had so far been impressed, as to respect that doctrine and fellowship to which he had joined himself, but whose heart was never divorced from the love of the world. A regard for his reputation induced him to sell his possessions with the rest: but the fear of poverty, and the want of faith in God, disposed him to reserve part of the price, while he brought the other to the Apostles. Peter upbraided him with his being under the influence of Satan, "in lying to the Holy Ghost:" showed him that the guilt of his hypocrisy was aggravated by this consideration, that the action was committed not against man, but against God; and that nothing could be said to extenuate his baseness, because he was under no necessity of selling his property at all, or of laying it at the Apostle's feet, after he had sold it. Immediately the unhappy man fell down dead: and, about three hours after, his wife Sapphira was made a similar monument of divine justice and provocation, as she had been partaker of her husband's guilt.

Such a proof of the discernment of spirits, and of the power of punishing hypocrisy, resting in the governors of the Church, filled all, who heard these things, with awe. The Lord had now shown his holiness, as well as his grace; and the love of the world, the standing heresy, which infects his Church in all ages, was a second time punished by a signal interposition of heaven. Multitudes of both sexes were added to the Church, chiefly of the common people. Of the rest indeed, though some could not but entertain favourable sentiments of Christianity, yet, among the rich and great, none durst hazard his character so far as to espouse it.*

The Sadducees appear at this time to have had the chief sway in the Jewish state. These formed a licentious, worldly-minded sect; and in their opinions they were the most corrupt of all those which at that time were maintained in

Persecution of the Apostles.

Judea. The high priest and his party were of this sect, and were filled with indignation, to see the progress of the Gospel. Their first step was to imprison the Apostles, who, by night, through the ministry of an angel, were set free, and ordered to preach in the temple. The next morning a full Sanhedrim was convened, and the Apostles were ordered to be brought into court. An angel had opened the prison doors; and the court was astonished to find that the prisoners had escaped out of prison: they were, however, informed, that they were preaching in the temple. The favourable regard of the common people obliged the Sanhedrim to use some address in conducting their prisoners in a gentle manner before the court. The high priest upbraids them with their disobedience to the former injunction of silence, to whom they returned their former answer, that "they ought to obey God rather than men." They bore witness to the resurrection of Christ, and declared, that "God had exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins," and that the "Holy Ghost, whom God bestows on those who obey him, witnessed" the same thing. With such plainness did these first Christians lay open the real nature of the Gospel, and exhibit it as something extremely different from a mere system of morals, though it included all good morality in its nature. The testimony of Jesus, the forgiveness of sins through his blood, and the operations of the Holy Ghost, as they were doubtless the peculiar characteristics of Christianity, so they were those things which most offended the Jewish rulers, and have been indeed the chief object of the enmity of unconverted men in all ages.

The spirit of persecution was proceeding to exercise itself in violent counsels. There was however one Gamaliel among them, a Pharisee, of a sect not indeed inimical to the doctrine of a resurrection, and by no means so heterodox in general as the Sadducees, though on the whole agreeing with them in the hatred of Christianity. This man was judicious, learned, and respectable, and possessed much worldly prudence. Beyond this no evidence appears. Providence made an important use of him, at this time, to prolong twelve most valuable lives, who were designed to spread the Gospel through the world; and by their inspired

* Acts v.

writings (not one of which was yet published) to speak to us at this day. Gamaliel, by some authentic historical precedents, instructed the members of the court, that persons, who rose up to propagate new sects, if not sent of God, were soon annihilated. He wished them to exercise forbearance and moderation toward the Apostles, whose influence would soon come to nothing, if it were merely human; if divine, to attempt its destruction would be equally foolish and impious. This sage advice was followed, and the Apostles were dismissed, but not without stripes, and a severe charge given them, no more to preach in the name of Jesus. They ceased not however to teach and preach Jesus Christ, and rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."

The Church was now much enlarged, consisting partly of native, partly of foreign Jews, who used the Greek language, called on that account Hellenists, or Grecians. These supposed, that in the daily supply of the poor, the Apostles had not manifested equal regard to their widows, as to those of the Hebrews. Men who know any thing of the work of God, in the visitation of his Holy Spirit, and have any acquaintance with the fulness of employ, which Christian ministers have in great and populous cities, in instructing, warning, consoling, and directing awakened and serious minds, will not wonder, if, through inadvertence, some temporary neglects might have taken place. The Apostles, however, with great mildness and wisdom, soon regulated this affair. They informed the disciples, that the ministry of the word of God must be attended to in the first place, and must not be neglected for the sake of providing for the poor. They therefore advised the disciples to look out for seven holy and wise men, to whom this business should be committed. "But we," say they, "will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."⁶ O that those

who call themselves their
 Deacons, successors, were always dis-
 posed in like manner!—The
 whole multitude consented with pleasure,
 Seven deacons were accordingly elected,
 Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor,
 Timon, Parmenas, and Nicholas, every
 one of whom has a Grecian name, and

therefore may have been an Hellenist; and in this easy way the first appearances of contention were blasted in the Church, and seven conductors were appointed to the Apostles, some of whom, at least, were of signal service, not only in temporal, but also in spiritual things. So happy is it to be under the conduct of the Holy Spirit, and so amiably did the Love of Christ then rule in the hearts of his people. Even many of the priests now obeyed the Gospel, and Jerusalem saw continually large accessions made to the Church.

Of these deacons, Stephen was at first the most distinguished. A synagogue of Hellenist Jews held a contest with him, the result of which filled them with such vexation, that they suborned men to accuse him of blasphemy against Moses, and against God. By this artifice, Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrim, where God threw a lustre over his countenance, which even his enemies could not but observe. In his defence he boldly rebuked the Jews, and showed that their conduct was but too faithful a copy of that of their fathers, who had treated Moses and the prophets with contempt, and had murdered a number of those, who had prophesied of the coming of the Just One—of whom they had now been the betrayers and murderers, while they vainly gloried in the magnificence of their temple, and put external services in the room of genuine piety.

Thus did Stephen aim at the same point with Peter, to convince his audience of sin in the first place, and to leave them no hope in their own righteousness. Seldom has the contrast between the spirit of the world and the Spirit of

Martyr-
 dom of
 Stephen.

God appeared more striking. "They were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth." But he, "full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God," and what he saw, he openly confessed. Their patience was exhausted, and they stoned him to death, while he was calling upon his Divine Master, and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Thus firm and constant was his faith: and his charity was no less conspicuous. For, he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge;" thus showing how entirely void of malice were those very vehement

⁶ Acts vi.

rebukes, which he had uttered against their wickedness, and which men of pusillanimous prudence are in all ages disposed to condemn. And when he had said this he fell asleep;—the usual beautiful phrase of the New Testament, to express the death of saints, and at the same time to intimate their expectation of a happy resurrection.

The eloquence of a Cicero would be mere feebleness on this occasion. All praise is below the excellency of that spirit, which shone in this first of Martyrs. Let it stand as an example of the genuine temper of martyrdom, of real faith in Christ, and of real charity to men;—and let heroes of the world, on the comparison, hide their heads in confusion.

Pontius Pilate having been disgraced, Judea seems at this time to have been without a procurator; and Vitellius, the governor of Syria, was a man of great moderation toward the Jews. In these circumstances the mildness of the Roman government was eventually the occasion of a severe persecution to the Church. The Jewish magistrates, who a little before had not the power of life and death, and could not murder the Lord of Life without the intervention of their Roman masters, were now left to themselves, at least in religious concerns, and Stephen was their first Christian victim. He was buried with great lamentation by the Church; and a considerable number suffered soon after his decease.

A young man called Saul, an Hellenist,† of Tarsus, a person of an active ambitious spirit, who had been educated at Jerusalem, under Gamaliel, and outstripped all his equals in Judaical learning, distinguished himself in this persecution. He took care of the clothes of the witnesses who were employed in stoning Stephen,‡ and made havoc of the church, entering into “every house, and haling men and women, he committed them to prison; and when they were put to death, he gave his voice against them.” In truth, the disciples seemed now to be left to the rage of men disposed to show them no mercy; and a superficial observer might have supposed, that the fate

of Thendas and Judas, mentioned by Gamaliel, was about to attend the Christians. Men had not yet learned that the “blood of the Martyrs was the seed of the Church.” The religious worship of the disciples must, doubtless, have suffered a grievous interruption. Indeed none of them found it safe to remain at Jerusalem. The Apostles alone thought good to stand their ground, and, by the watchful care of their God, they were preserved. The Christians, dispersed throughout Judea and Samaria, preached the word wherever they went. And thus this persecution was the first occasion of the diffusion of the Gospel through various regions, and what was designed to annihilate it was overruled to extend it exceedingly. But we shall confine ourselves in this section to the Church of Jerusalem.

Saul, who was all attention to the work of persecution, was vexed to hear, that a number of the Christians had escaped to Damascus, an ancient city of Syria; and he procured a commission from the high priest to bring them bound to Jerusalem. It was a considerable journey, but religious glory was his idol.

Conversion of
Saul, or
Paul;
A. D. 36.

When he was near to Damascus, a sudden light from heaven, exceeding even that of the sun,* arrested the daring zealot, and struck him to the ground. At the same time a voice called to him, saying, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, “I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” In this marvellous manner did the Son of God make known his truth, his majesty, and his power, to this enterprising persecutor, and evince to all ages, what he can do to the “praise of the glory of his grace.” The will of Saul was broken, and for the first time made submissive to God, “Lord what wilt thou have me to do?” was his cry; and whenever this is uttered from the heart, it will not fail to bring down the divine blessing. He was directed to go into Damascus, where he remained three days without sight and without food, yet constantly employed in prayer for divine grace and mercy. Thus the necessity of the conviction of sin was preached to him, with circumstances more extraordi-

* Acts vii.

† That is, one born and bred a Jew in some country where the Greek language was spoken.

‡ Acts viii.

* Acts ix.

nary than those which took place upon the preaching to the three thousand first converts; but the spiritual instruction conveyed was precisely the same. The work of converting grace may vary very much in non-essential circumstances,—its nature never varies. The grace of forgiveness by Jesus Christ would have been no welcome news to this Pharisee, had he still remained in the confidence of his own righteousness; but now it was as life from the dead. After three days, by the particular direction of a vision from the Lord Jesus, Ananias, a disciple of Damascus, was sent to him with the tidings of peace. He had heard of the active malice of Saul, but was encouraged to go by a positive declaration that Saul was a chosen vessel. Ananias opened his commission by informing Saul, that the Lord Jesus had sent him, to the end that he might receive his sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. Both these effects immediately took place. Ananias exhorted him to delay no longer, but to “wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* He was baptized, and soon refreshed both in mind and body; and from that time the whole vehemence of his natural character, and the whole power of his intellectual faculties, which were doubtless of the first magnitude among men, were sanctified to the service of Jesus Christ; and until his death, he was engaged in a course of labours in the Church with unparalleled success. For this is he who is commonly known by the name of St. Paul, and “his memorial is blessed for ever.” He was particularly commissioned to preach to the Gentiles; and of all the Apostles he seems to have entered with the greatest penetration into the nature of Christianity. Salvation by grace through faith was his darling theme, a doctrine diametrically opposite to the self-righteous scheme in which he had been wont to glory. His countrymen, the Jews, were particularly fierce in opposing this grand article of the Gospel, and were stung to the quick when attacked by their once favourite champion. No doubt he had been sincere in his religion formerly; yet is he far from exculpating himself on this account. On the contrary, he magnifies the grace of the Lord Jesus, as extended to him, a blasphemer, a persecutor, injurious, and the chief of sinners,†

in whom the long-suffering of the Lord had been exhibited, “for a pattern to them who shall hereafter believe on him to live everlasting:”—that mankind may know, that God accepts sinners on Christ’s account alone, and through faith in his blood; and that nothing can be more contrary to the whole design of the Gospel, than to seek salvation by our own works of any kind. He seems ever after to have lamented deeply the miserable state of his countrymen, who “had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.”* He pitied their self-righteous notions; he knew by his own experience how deceitful such notions were to those, who were under the power of them: and, while he rejoiced on account of that grace which had redeemed himself from hell, he commiserated those, who were fast advancing thither in fearless presumption. In the third chapter of the Philippians, he gives us a very particular view of himself. To trust in any thing for salvation, except Christ alone, is with him “to have confidence in the flesh.” No man appeared once to have had more just pretensions to such confidence than himself. His regular circumcision on the eighth day, Hebrew descent, Pharisaic strictness, zealous Judaism, and blameless morals, seemed to exalt him above the common level of his countrymen: but he declares that he “reckoned all these things as dung, that he might win Christ;” and in him alone he desires to be found, without his own righteousness to trust in; and he maintains the settled determination of his soul in this article of justification. Were it not for the perverse blindness of fallen nature, one might be astonished to find many persons of learning and good sense, after reading this account of the Apostle by himself, still endeavouring to represent him as mixing grace and works in the subject of justification, and describing him as only excluding ceremonial works from the office of justifying a sinner. But to proceed:

Having preached Christ for three years abroad, he went up to Jerusalem. Here he attempted to join himself to the Church, but the remembrance of what he had been, and the very imperfect account which they had received of what he then was, prevented the Christians from receiving him, till Barnabas brought him to the Apostles

* Acts xxi. 16.

† 1 Tim. i.

* Rom. x.

(two of them only, Peter and James* the Lord's brother) and informed them of his genuine conversion. This cleared up all doubts; and he was now engaged in the work of the ministry at Jerusalem, and would gladly have remained there, but the Lord, by a vision, assured him, that the Jews would not receive his testimony: and that the great scene of his labours was to be among the Gentiles.

In fact, some address was needful in his brethren to save his life from the rage of the Jews, and he was conducted to his native city of Tarsus. By this time, however, the fury of persecution subsided: the Lord gave rest to his Church: and the disciples both at Jerusalem and elsewhere, walked in the very best manner, in which they can walk on this side heaven, "in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." Where these go together, excesses of all sorts are prevented; and inward joy and outward obedience conspire to demonstrate, that there Christ reigns indeed.

Yet so slow are men to receive new divine truths, especially those which militate against old prejudices, that the Christians of Jerusalem contended with Peter on account of his intercourse with the Gentiles of Cæsarea. The fierceness of Peter's natural character was now abated; with great meekness he reasoned on the case with his bigoted brethren, and convinced them, by the evident proofs of the grace of God being vouchsafed to Gentiles, that it was lawful to have communion with them.† They glorified God, saying, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance to life." Unutterable grace indeed to us, confessed at length and owned by our elder brethren the Jews! David had just reason to say, "Let me fall into the hand of the Lord, for his mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man."‡ Even a converted Jew, admits with difficulty, that the grace of God may visit a Gentile!

The visits of Paul to Jerusalem seem to have been but short. The body of the Jewish nation sought his destruction; and his Gentile connections and very reserved practice of Mosaical ceremonies, rendered him no peculiar favourite in the mother-church, though they "could not but glorify the grace of God which was in him."§

But the Church is not perfect on earth. His next return to Jerusalem was, however, of a popular kind, namely, to convey the alms of Gentile converts to the Jewish Christians oppressed by a "famine, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Cæsar."** His companion to Jerusalem was Barnabas, whose liberality in the beginning had been so eminent. This service being discharged, they both returned to minister to the Gentiles.

The civil power of Judea was now in the hands of Herod Agrippa, a great favourite of the Roman emperor, a person of considerable talents, and full of that specious virtue, which, in secular annals, would entitle him to great renown. In the church of Christ he stands a persecutor, and his virtues are, in the strong but just language of Augustine, splendid sins. Yet his persecution was not the effect of a cruel temper. Had the Jews regarded Christianity with a favourable eye, he, at least, would have protected it. But long before this time the general favour of the common people toward the Christians had been dissipated by the active malice of the rulers, and Christ was found to have no lasting friends, but those whom he made so by effectual grace. The first victim of this political persecution was James the son of Zebedee: he was slain with the sword, the first of the Apostles, who departed from the Church below, to join that which is above.

Finding that the act was popular, Herod attempted to dispatch Peter also.‡ But God had reserved him for more services; and yet, in all appearance, there was no hope of his preservation. He was imprisoned, and strictly guarded, with a view, after the passover, when the concourse of Jews at Jerusalem was very large, to have him publicly executed. The king was pleased with the idea of ingratiating himself with his subjects; but the Church has arms which men of the world understand not, and they were vigorously used on this occasion.

A spirit of earnest persevering prayer was poured on the Church of Jerusalem. The Lord delayed to answer till the critical moment:—a method not uncommon of exercising the faith, and zeal, and patience of his people. By the miraculous interposition of an angel, Peter, the night before his intended execution,

* Gal. i. 18, 19. Acts ix. 27.

† Acts xi. ‡ 2 Sam. xxiv. 14.

§ Gal. i. ult.

* Acts xi. toward the end.

† Splendida peccata.

‡ Acts xii.

was delivered from prison. At first he imagined that to be done in a vision, which was a reality. At length being fully come to himself, and reflecting on what the Lord had done, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark, a woman of eminent piety and of some splendour, where many Christians were gathered together in the religious employment of prayer. Those only, who know what the spirit of prayer is, can conceive the vehemence of wrestling, which then engaged Christian hearts. The scene which followed was at once most astonishing and most pleasing. They hear a person knocking at the door; a young woman named Rhoda comes to hear; she knows Peter's voice; joy prevents her from opening the gate; she returns to inform the supplicants, that Peter stood before it; they are induced to suspect her of insanity, rather than to believe that their prayers were heard; so slow are even the best to believe the goodness of God. She perseveres in her first assertion; it must then, say they, be his angel.* Peter continues knocking; they open at length; they behold him, and are astonished. Having waved his hand, and brought them to silence, he informs them of the Lord's wonderful interposition in his favour. Go, says he, and show these things to James, and the brethren. James, who was the Lord's brother, with himself and John had the greatest concern in the government of the mother Church at that time. Peter retires then to a place of concealment.

Little did Herod apprehend that his own death should precede that of his prisoner.

On a public occasion, in which he appeared in great splendour, he delivered an oration, so pleasing to his audience,

that they shouted, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." That moment he was smitten with an incurable disease by an angel, because he "gave not God the glory." That pride and ambition, which had gained him the character of a patriot, orator, and statesman, were punished with death by Him, who "seeth not as man seeth;" and he fell a warning to princes, not to seek glory in opposition to God.

The next memorable circumstance in the history of the mother-school will

* The idea of the ministry of angels among men was popular with the Jews; possibly these good men might carry it too far, but I pressed not to settle the point.

† Gal. ii. 2.

deserve our particular attention. This was the first Christian council. The controversy which occasioned it, involved a subject of vast consequence in real religion.

* About twenty years had elapsed since the effusion of the Spirit had commenced; a period of time in which, even in the midst of one of the most wicked nations in the world, in Jerusalem and in its neighbourhood, God had erected his kingdom in the hearts of thousands who had lived in great unanimity and charity, "keeping the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace," conscious of their Divine Master's spiritual presence, and rejoicing in the hope of his second coming to complete their felicity. In his strength, they had sustained, with much patience, two very severe persecutions, in the former of which a Deacon, in the second an Apostle, had sealed the truth with their blood. In an earlier part of this period their holy harmony had been a little interrupted by a secular contention, but this was soon composed. The time was not yet arrived, when those, who called themselves Christians, could so much forget the dignity of their profession, as to contend passionately for worldly things. The present controversy had a more intimate connexion with the Christian religion itself, and therefore seemed more likely to disturb the union of men, with whom spiritual objects were the chief ground of concern. The Jews were strongly attached to their own religious national peculiarities. Under the influence of pride, envy, and other evil passions, this disposition supported the spirit of self-righteousness. Nothing could be more contrary to the genius of the Gospel than the attempt of some Christian Jews, who endeavoured to infuse into the Gentile converts an idea of the necessity of circumcision, and of obedience to the whole of the Mosaic ceremonial, in order to salvation. Some of the Pharisees themselves were now real Christians, but they were displeased to see and hear of so many Gentiles admit-

First
Christian
Council :
A. D. 52.

* I once for all observe here, that the niceties of Chronology make no part of my study in this Work. Yet I shall endeavour to attend so much to historical connexion, as to be generally right within a few years. This seems sufficient for my purpose; and whoever attends to the second and third chapters to the Galatians will see, that I cannot err much in this instance.

ted into the Christian Church, and regarded by the Apostles as on an equal footing with themselves in the favour of God. Thus were their minds darkened with respect to the article of justification; and, before they were aware, by thus insisting on the necessity of circumcision, they practically averred, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was not sufficient for man's salvation; that the favour of God was to be purchased by human works, in part at least; and that their ritual observances contributed to their acceptance with God.

This was the first time that the natural pride and ignorance of the human heart, disguised under the pretence of religious zeal, attempted to undermine the simplicity of the faith, by which hitherto Christians had rested with complacency on Jesus alone, had enjoyed peace of conscience, and had been constrained to obedience by love. The Apostles Paul and Barnabas looked on the growing evil with a jealous eye, and after no small fruitless altercation with the zealots, thought it better to refer the full consideration of the question to a council of Apostles and Elders at Jerusalem. And now Paul returned to Jerusalem the third time since his conversion, and about seventeen years after it; and, in his progress with Barnabas, reported the conversion of the Gentiles, which gave great joy to the Christian Jews in general.

At the Council, Peter, who had returned to Jerusalem, and since Agrippa's death was no longer molested, opened the debate by observing, that a considerable time ago, God had selected him to preach to the Gentiles, and had blessed his labours with unequivocal success, in purifying their hearts by faith, and in dispensing the Holy Ghost among them, no less than on the Jews. After God himself had thus decided, he said it appeared presumptuous in any person to impose a yoke on the Gentiles, from which the Divine Indulgence had exempted them. He insisted that the yoke itself, especially when laid on the conscience as necessary to salvation, was intolerable. and he concluded, that even they, who still, for charitable and prudential reasons, persisted in the ritual observances, were yet obliged to repose for salvation only on the "grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," as well as these Gentiles, who never had observed them at all. This full testimony of Peter was supported by Paul and Barnabas,

who gave ample proof of the Divine Grace vouchsafed to the Gentiles. James, who seems to have been the standing pastor of Jerusalem, confirmed the same argument, by the propheta of the Old Testament, agreeably to Peter's declaration of the mercy of God in visiting the Gentiles. He gave his opinion, that the Gentiles should no longer be molested with notions subversive of the grace of God, and tending to teach them dependence on human works instead of the atonement of Christ for salvation. Only he recommended, that the Council should direct them to abstain from the pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.* For the number of Jews dispersed through Gentile cities, who heard Moses read every Sabbath-day, required these precautions.

A letter was sent according to these views; nor does it appear that there was one dissenting voice in the Council. It is remarkable, that the synod used this striking expression of censure against the zealots, they "troubled you with words, subverting your souls." Certainly the charitable Apostles would not so strongly have rebuked a trifling error. Nor is there, I think, any other method of understanding this aright, but on the principle already stated, that the harm did not consist in practising these ceremonies, though virtually abrogated by the death of Christ. For these were practised by the Apostles themselves, constantly by such as lived in Judea, and occasionally by the rest. The real fault was the depending upon them for salvation, in opposition to the grace of Christ. Here the Apostles knew it behoved them to be jealous, that God might be glorified, and souls comforted: and the joy, and consolation, and establishment in the faith,† which ensued amongst the Gentiles, confirms this interpretation.

It is to be feared, that the Church of Jerusalem received not all the benefit, which was to be wished from the wisdom and charity of the Council, though it

* Though an idol was nothing, and what was offered to it was nothing, yet St. Paul has given solid reasons why Christians should abstain from such meats. Fornication was a sin, concerning the evil of which the heathen converts might be, he apprehended, as yet unconverted: and to abstain from things strangled, and from blood, was necessary, in order to have any intercourse with Jews.

† Acts xv. 31. and xvi. 5.

doubtless would be of service to many. But its most wholesome effects were felt among the Gentiles. The account, which we have in the Epistle to the Galatians, leads us to suspect that the self-righteous spirit had a very deep influence among some members of the Church at Jerusalem. The Apostle Paul was obliged to exercise a particular caution among them, and to confer in private with the pillars of the Church, lest he should give umbrage to the Jewish Christians, and injure his own usefulness among his countrymen.* In this he acted with equal prudence and charity: yet nothing could induce him to act inconsistently with the faith. To press the Gentile converts to Jewish conformity, appeared to him in this light, as no reasons but those of peace, charity, and prudential expediency, could be pleaded for the continuance of such observances, even among Jews: and therefore among Gentiles, who never had been under the yoke, no other construction could be put on the practice, than that it was necessary to salvation, and that the primary doctrine of the Christian religion, the sufficiency of the blood of Christ for pardon of sin, was disbelieved. The same Apostle therefore, who, on another occasion circumcised Timothy† because of the Jews in the neighbourhood, he being by the mother's side of Hebrew extraction, now insisted, that Titus, a perfect Gentile, should not be circumcised,‡ because of false brethren, who had craftily introduced themselves among the Christians, with a view to undermine their dependence on Jesus, and to draw them back to the self-righteousness of Judaism. The liberty of Christ was what he was zealous to support; and he would not, for an hour, allow any self-righteous mixtures, "that the truth of the Gospel might continue with them;" an expression, which throws farther light on the controversy we have reviewed; and shows distinctly, that not circumcision itself, but the dependence on it for salvation in the room of Christ, was the great object of the Apostle's opposition.

He had hitherto found, to his satisfaction, that all his brethren of the Apostolic college had heartily concurred in checking the progress of self-righteousness. But a lamentable instance of human imbecility soon appeared. Peter, after hav-

ing* taken a social meal with some Gentile converts, afterwards withdrew from their company, on the arrival of certain Jewish zealots, who came to him from James: and thus, for fear of their censure, he durst not keep company with men, whose fellowship he yet inwardly revered, and expected to enjoy in heaven. An error committed by a respectable character is infectious. Other Jews dissembled in a similar way:—even Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation, and the truth of the Gospel was in danger of being forsaken on the authority of those, who had hitherto upheld its standard in the world. Such infirmities of the wise and good prove, beyond doubt, to whom alone we are obliged for the preservation of Christian truth in the earth. The Lord roused the spirit of Paul on the occasion: he vindicated the truth of the Gospel by an open and manly rebuke of Peter: and thus a seasonable check was put to the growing torrent of Pharisaism,—that dark but deadly foe of the Gospel,—which, in one form or another, is ever ready to cloud the light of truth, and to sap the foundation of Christian peace and life.

St. Paul's fourth visit to Jerusalem is but just mentioned in Scripture.† His fifth was attended with more memorable events. It was seen by the spirit of prophecy, that he would undergo bitter persecution from the infidel Jews; and the guarded kindness with which he was received by many, even of the believers there, formed no pleasing inducement to him to repeat his visits. But divine charity prevailed in St. Paul's mind over all objections, difficulties, and dangers: he rebuked his friends at Casarea, who dissuaded him from prosecuting his journey, by professing his readiness "not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus."‡ His resignation silenced them: they said, "the will of the Lord be done." On his arrival he went to James, and in the presence of all the elders, recounted the work of God among the Gentiles. They glorified the Lord, and rejoiced sincerely on the account: but at the same time they expressed what concern it gave them, to find how jealous of Paul the brethren were, having heard a false report of his teaching all the Jews to for-

* Gal. ii.

† Acts xvi. 3.

* Gal. ii. 12.

† Acts xviii. 22.

‡ Gal. ii.
Vol. I.

‡ Acts xxi. 18.

sake the Messaic observances. Doubtless he had not done this: but, he had done what displeased the Jewish zealots: he had insisted on the exemption of Gentiles from the yoke; and men, once out of humour, are disposed to hearken to malevolent exaggerations. In this exigency the advice of James was at the same time prudent and charitable, namely, that he should join with four men, who were bound by a Nazarite vow, in the customary services of the temple, till a sacrifice should be offered for each of them. With this Paul concurred; and thus he gave the clearest proof that he was ready to conform both to Jew and Gentile in things indifferent, with a view to promote the salvation of men. A few remarks, suggested by these transactions, shall close this chapter.

1. We see here that really there was no difference of sentiment between Paul and James in religious opinions, as from a few expressions in the epistle of the latter,* some are glad to insinuate. These two Apostles, and indeed the whole college, were perfectly agreed in their views of the nature of the Gospel.

2. In Peter there evidently was, in one instance, a duplicity of conduct with respect to the Mosaic rites,—in Paul a steady uniformity. He lived as a Jew himself: vows, synagogue-worship, and the various rites of the law he observed, not even sacrifices excepted, on occasion. He could not indeed look on them now in any other light than as branches of a human establishment; since the death of Christ had annulled their divine authority. The establishment itself he knew was soon to cease by the destruction of Jerusalem. To him and to the rest of the Apostles it appeared more charitable, to submit to the inconveniences of conformity, than to irritate the whole body of the Jews on account of circumstantialities. On this ground pious men in all ages have acted, and those, who have most excelled in Christian fruitfulness, have been most remarkable for their candour. At the same time the inflexible firmness of Paul in vindicating the doctrine of justification, by allowing on no account the circumcision of Gentiles, informs us where he laid the stress for salvation. This union of candour and firmness in

the same person, acting variously in opposite circumstances, has led some writers to accuse him of inconsistency, who seem not to have understood the principles of the controversy. This was the case of Jerom of old. His controversy with Augustine on the subject is yet extant in the epistle of the latter, whose statement of the affair I think perfectly just; and it is agreeable to the views in which the conduct of the Apostle has now been exhibited.

3. We see here how infinitely important is the doctrine of justification! What excellent fruits it had brought forth* in the Jewish Church, now consisting of many thousands, has been shown. It appears how naturally the human heart departs from the faith of Christ, before it is aware. The penetrating and zealous spirit of Paul was employed by the divine goodness to uphold still the standard of truth. Many, no doubt, received benefit from his example; but the glory of this Church was now on the decline.

4. The evil of bigotry is no less evident; and how naturally it connects itself with self-righteousness is also sufficiently apparent. An eager stress laid on any rite, or form, or external work whatever, easily thus degenerates. Steadfastness in the faith, and candour, and charity, are, under God, our preservatives against it.

There was little opportunity of trying on the minds of Christians, the effect of the charitable scheme, concerted between the two Apostles, because before the seven days were expired, the malice of the infidel Jews broke out against Paul. St. Luke's narrative, from the twenty-first chapter to the end of his history, is spent on the consequences of this. The cheerfulness, magnanimity, charity, and piety of the Apostle Paul: the convincing force of his reasoning, which caused Felix to tremble, and Agrippa to confess himself almost a Christian: his preservation from Jewish malice by the privilege of Roman citizenship: the perils he underwent by sea and land, till he arrived a prisoner at Rome, and his labours for two years in the ministry among them who visited him in his imprisonment: these things are so circumstantially, and, I may justly add, so beautifully related by the sacred writer,

Paul and James agree in sentiment.

no difference of sentiment between Paul and James in religious opinions, as from a few expressions in the epistle of the latter,* some are

Paul was sent in bonds from Sidon by sea:

A. D. 62.

* James ii., latter part.

* Acts xxi. 20.

that I shall refer my reader to him altogether, especially as neither the history of the mother-church, nor of any other particular churches, is connected with the account.

The malice of the Jews having failed of its object in Paul, by his appeal to Cæsar, would gladly have gratified itself on James. But he, though no Roman citizen, was shielded a little longer by the lenity of the Roman government.* His long residence at Jerusalem, where he was stationary for the most part, had given him an opportunity, by a blameless life, to abate the prejudice of his unbelieving countrymen, and to extort the

A. D. 60. tribute of praise from the populace in general. About the year of our Lord sixty, he wrote his Catholic epistle. It is addressed to Jews in general; sometimes he speaks to Christians, sometimes to infidels, like a person well known, and of considerable influence among both. The covetousness, infamy, and persecuting spirit of the nation are described in strong colours; and he writes like one who foresees the speedy desolation which was to overtake them. By the practical turn of his doctrine, by his decanting on the vices of the tongue,* of partiality to the rich, and of contemptuous treatment of the poor in Christian assemblies,† and by his direction against vain swearing,‡ it is but too evident, that the Church had considerably declined from its original purity and simplicity; and that the crafts of Satan, aided ever by human depravity, were wearing out apace the precious fruits of that effusion of the Spirit, which has been described. Such is the common course of things in all similar cases, within the like period of about thirty years. The Lord had not however forsaken his Church; though its members were in a persecuted state, and were brought before Jewish magistrates,§ and vexed, so far as the rage of this infatuated nation had power to exert itself. He particularly exhorts them to patience under their trials, and a resignation to the Divine Will.

About the same time, or a little after, this Church was favoured with the Epis-

tle to the Hebrews, which seems to have been written by St. Paul.*

As apostasy, partly through the fashionable and natural evil of self-righteousness, and partly through the cruelty of persecution, was the great mischief to be feared among them, he directs them particularly to maintain the Christian faith. St. Paul, in this Epistle, largely and distinctly shows the accomplishment of all the Messianic types in Jesus. His priesthood, sacrifice, and intercession, are amply described. The privileges and benefits of his salvation are distinctly stated. He exhorts them to constancy in the simple faith of Christ. He urges them to persevere in supporting their Christian assemblies, from which some† had declined, probably through fear of persecution. He reminds them of the severities they had patiently undergone after their first illumination, of the compassion which his sufferings had excited among them, and of the cheerfulness with which they had sustained the spoiling of their goods, from the confidence they "had of having in heaven a better and enduring substance." The whole turn of his exhortation shows, that they were in a state of grievous molestation at the time of writing this Epistle. And yet from their dulness in divine things, which he so warmly censures,‡ it is certain their spiritual taste had declined. The persecution of St. Paul at Jerusalem probably excited a general hostility against the Church. That it did not proceed to blood,§ seems owing to no other cause than the protection of the Roman government. The Apostle is particularly earnest in exhorting them to remember and hold fast the grace of the Gospel, which their first ministers had taught them, and to consider that Jesus Christ was their great object, and that a return to Jewish dependencies would ruin their souls. On the whole, we have here the most glorious views of the Gospel, and the most distinct information of the nature of a true adherence to it; though I see no evidence on the face of the Epistle for concluding, that he forbade them that same occasional and prudential compliance with Judaism in external observances, which all the Apostles practised. It

* The first persecution of the Christians began about A. D. 64, the 11th year of the reign of the Emperor Nero. See Chap. XV.

† Chap. iii.

‡ Chap. v.

§ Chap. ii.

¶ Chap. ii. 6.

* St. Peter, in his second epistle to the Jews, reminds them of St. Paul's letter to them; which probably, could have been no other than this epistle.

† Heb. x. 25.

‡ Ib. v. 12.

§ Ib. xli. 4.

was the departure of the HEART from the Lord Jesus, against which he warned them. He dwells not largely on particular duties. He had not lived much among them; and special details of practical matters came better from the pastoral pen of James.

Thus earnestly did these two Apostles instruct and warn a declining Church. But grace has its seasons! God will not always strive with man; yet the use of the Epistles will remain, till time shall be no more.

CHAPTER II.

JUDEA AND GALILEE.

THE Holy Land was divided into three provinces, JUDEA, GALILEE, and SAMARIA. This last was in a situation so peculiar, as to deserve to be considered distinctly. And of the Churches of the two former I have not much more to say, than that their state, by fair analogy, may be estimated from that of the mother-church. Indeed a strong foundation had been laid for their conversion by the ministry of John the Baptist, and by that of our Lord in the days of his flesh. The angel Gabriel had foretold of the son of Zacharias, "that many of the children of Israel he should turn to the Lord their God."* Repentance was his theme, and by this he prepared the way of the Lord. Jesus himself condescended in his subordinate capacity of prophet and teacher to pursue the same method, though no regular churches were yet formed. He promised that the gift of the Holy Ghost should be vouchsafed to his disciples; and we have several intimations,† that a greater degree of success, of purity, of knowledge, and of glory, should attend his religion after he should leave this world, than during his personal ministry.‡

Judea and Galilee being thus prepared for the Gospel, the blessed tidings began to be spread through them, and to be attended with rapid success, soon after the first persecution which arose concerning Stephen. Those, who had felt the flame

of Divine Love in Jerusalem, being obliged to flee, preached through these regions, and, as we have seen, many thousands were converted. The mother-church, no doubt, was the most numerous, but various churches in the country must have contributed to make up the sum. The small size of Palestine may tempt some to wonder, how, if many thousands became Christians, the main body of the nation could yet remain in infidelity. The amazing populousness and fertility of the country accounts for this. The number of populous towns, in Galilee particularly, is astonishing, as appears from Josephus's narrative of the Jewish war. The single town of Gadara, near the lake of Gennesaret, by no means a town of the first magnitude, maintained two thousand swine.* If then the importance of regions be measured by the number of inhabitants, rather than by the extent of ground, this small country might vie perhaps with modern Russia.

Of these Churches the first instruments were not the Apostles themselves, though they doubtless visited them afterwards, and confirmed them. James the son of Zebedee would not confine his labours to Jerusalem, till the time of his martyrdom, no more than the rest of the twelve, if perhaps we except James the son of Alphaeus, who was the first standing Pastor of Jerusalem.

These Churches, most probably, followed the example of the parent-church, both in its first love and comfortable progress, and also in its unhappy declension. Peter's activity in establishing them was very conspicuous. "The Lord wrought effectually" in him always for the conversion of the Jews.† He passed through all quarters, and visited the places most remote from the capital, such as Lydda, Saron, and Joppa.‡ In all these places the Spirit of God accompanied his work. It was in this last city that the Lord by him raised Tabitha from the dead. I should scarcely have mentioned this miracle, in a work which professes all along to record the ordinary, not the extraordinary operations of the Holy Ghost, were not this woman distinguished by "her good works and alms-deeds which she did." All the widows stood by Peter weeping, and showing the "coats and garments which she had made, while she was with them." Thus had this woman's faith

* Luke i. 2.

† John xiv. and xvi.

‡ Let this account, once for all, for the much greater use which I make of the Acts and of the Epistles, than of the four Gospels. These last are indeed inestimable; but their uses are of another kind, and fall not so much within the plan of this work.

* Mark v. 15. † Gal. ii. 8. ‡ Acts ix.

evidenced itself by good works; and the Spirit of piety and of prayer had gone hand in hand with that of industrious beneficence. Hail, Tabitha! thou hast the highest glory, and of the most solid kind, which is attainable on earth! But the reader sees how simple and low Christian exploits must appear in the eyes of worldly men. They are not like the swelling deeds of heroes and statesmen, which have hitherto, for the most part, monopolized the historic page. But the persons who are influenced by the Spirit of Christ like Tabitha, will yet know with whom they would wish to be numbered. The female sex, almost excluded from civil history, will appear perhaps more conspicuous in ecclesiastical. Less immersed in secular concerns, and less haughty and independent in spirit, they seem, in all ages, to have had their full proportion, or more than the other sex, of the grace of the Gospel.

CHAPTER III.

SAMARIA.

This country lay in the midst between Judea and Galilee, though distinguished from them both in its polity and religion. The inhabitants possessed a large part of the district, which had belonged to the ten tribes, whom the kings of Assyria had carried into captivity. These conquerors had filled their vacant place with various idolaters,* who mixed the worship of Jehovah with their idols, vainly boasted of their relation to Jacob,† professed to regard the law of Moses, and despised or at least depreciated the rest of the Old Testament. Our Saviour clearly decided the contest, which, for ages, had been carried on between them and the Jews, in favour of the latter.‡ But though the Samaritan was an idolater in his very foundation, yet in moral practice he appears not worse than the Jew. Both, indeed, were at this time extremely corrupt, and gloried in cherishing an enmity, which forbade them the exercise of common humanity to one another.

The Divine Saviour pitied this people. He visited them himself,§ and some sinners were thereby converted. He made a second attempt;|| but the bigotry of the village to which he approached, prevented

them from receiving him there, a circumstance which excited the fiery zeal of the two sons of Zebedee, and gave occasion to our Lord to say, "The Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He meekly bore the repulse, and went to another village. But the effusions of his kindness toward this unhappy people were now to appear in abundance.

Among the seven deacons, the next person to Stephen, in zeal and activity, was Philip. Driven from Jerusalem by the persecution, he was directed to go to the city of Samaria, perhaps to the same city called Sychar, where our Lord had conversed with the woman over Jacob's well. There he preached Christ, and the Gospel entered the hearts of many, so that there was great joy in that city.** The inhabitants appear to have been a very ignorant simple people; but now that the spirit of God was poured upon them, none received the Gospel with more cordial satisfaction. One effect immediately appeared, which indeed never fails to attend the hearty reception of the Gospel. Superstition and diabolical delusions vanished. A person, named Simon, had deceived this people with sorceries; I dare not say with pretended sorceries: We shall see sufficient proof, before we have done with the apostolical history, that sorcery was a real thing. For a long time they had been infatuated; but Philip's doctrine expelled their regard for these things, and numbers of both sexes were baptized. Simon himself, though a stranger to the nature and power of Christ's religion, was yet convinced, that Christianity in general was true; and this seems the just idea of a mere historical believer.

The Apostles hearing of the happy reception of the Gospel at Samaria, sent down Peter and John, who prayed on the behalf of the people, that the Holy Ghost might be imparted through the imposition of hands. The Spirit was communicated, not only in extraordinary gifts, but also in an effusion of the same holy graces, which had appeared in Judea. The former were those which only attracted the attention of Simon. His avaricious heart immediately conceiving the prospect of vast wealth to be acquired were he only once possessed of this supernatural power, he offered the Apostles a sum of money

* 2 Kings xvii.

† John iv. 20.

‡ Luke ix. 52.

§ John v. 12.

|| John iv.

* Acts viii. 9.

for the communication of the secret. Peter, who saw distinctly both his covetousness and his ignorance, rebuked him in the severest manner, assured him that his heart was wrong altogether, and his state accursed, notwithstanding his baptism and profession of Christianity. At the same time he exhorted him to repent, and to seek the divine forgiveness. Here we see how singularly remote the religion of Jesus Christ is from all worldly plans and schemes, and what an awful difference there ever is between a real and a nominal Christian. The conscience of Simon felt the reproof: he begged the Apostles' prayers; but it does not appear that he prayed for himself. Peter and John preached through many Samaritan villages, and then returned to Jerusalem.

The Samaritans, a sort of half Jews,—for they were all circumcised,—being favoured with the same spiritual blessings as the rest, the minds of Christians were prepared to expect a similar extension of heavenly grace to uncircumcised idolaters. And among the wonders of divine love which we have reviewed, these are pleasing circumstances, that Jews and Samaritans, who, for ages, had disagreed in rites, should now be united in Jesus; and while each felt the same obligations to grace, should have learned mutual charity for the first time.

CHAPTER IV.

ETHIOPIA.*

It is instructive to observe, by what gentle degrees the goodness of God was preparing the way for the general diffusion of his grace in the world. The first Christians, even the Apostles themselves, were by no means disposed to think with any particular compassion of Gentiles, and would scarcely have thought of spreading the Gospel beyond the bounds of their own nation, had not the persecution driven many out of Jerusalem. The teachers themselves needed to be taught of God in this part of their office. So helpless is man in divine things, even

after he has been favoured with some spiritual light, that only by fresh communications, he can be induced to make any additional improvement. After Philip had finished his work at Samaria, he was, by an extraordinary commission, ordered to travel southward toward the desert. He soon discovered the reason: he fell in with an Ethiopian eunuch, a minister of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians, who had been worshipping at Jerusalem, and was returning home in his chariot. Men, who feel the worth of their souls, will not be unemployed when alone. Their concern for their best interests will operate most powerfully, when they are most disengaged from business. The man was reading the prophet Isaiah, and the adorable providence of God had directed him at that particular time to the fifty-third chapter, which gives so clear a description of Christ crucified. Philip asked him, if he understood what he was reading. The man confessing his ignorance, desired Philip to come and sit with him. The Evangelist took the opportunity of expounding to him the Gospel, from the passage he was then reading, which at once lays open the guilty and the miserable condition of mankind, their recovery only by the grace of Jesus Christ, the nature, end, and efficacy of his death and resurrection, and the doctrine of justification before God by the knowledge of the same Jesus and by his merits. The Ethiopian's mind had been prepared for the doctrine: he had been at the pains to attend Jewish instructions, the best then to be had in the world, except the Christian, which he now heard, for the first time; nor had the scandalous wickedness of the Jewish nation hindered him from attending that worship, which he believed to be of divine origin. The ignorance of his own country suited not even the weakest and most glimmering light of a serious mind. His case is an encouragement for men, however ignorant and mistaken at present, to seek earnestly to God, for he will take care that they shall find. The man felt himself guilty and wicked, and the views of the prophetic chapter before us, laid open by the preacher, discovered to him the remedy, which it pleased God so powerfully to apply to his heart, that as soon as they came to a certain water, he desired to be baptized. Philip assured him that there was no impediment, if he was sincere in the faith of Christ. On which

* The Ethiopia to which this chapter is confined, seems to be that part of the country, whose metropolis is called Meroe, situated in a large island encompassed by the Nile and the rivers of Astapus and Astoborra: For in these parts (as the elder Pliny informs us), Queens had a long time governed under the title of Candace.—See *Cave's Life of Philip*.

he professed his belief, that the Jesus of Nazareth, whom Philip had preached to him, was indeed the Son of God prophesied of by Isaiah, and that he answered the character of Saviour there given to him. Philip then baptized the Ethiopian, who, though his instructor was, by the Spirit of the Lord, immediately taken from him, went on his way into his own country rejoicing.* Doubtless this joy had a solid and powerful cause; and if this case be compared with that of the three thousand first converts, and both of them with the doctrine of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, conversion will appear to be a spiritual internal work, humbling men for sin, and comforting them with forgiveness by Christ. The nominal profession, with which great numbers of persons content themselves, may seem to fit them for little else, than to disgrace Christianity by their practice.

It is impossible that the Ethiopian, thus powerfully enlightened and rejoicing in God, could be silent when he returned home. His influence and character would at least secure to him a respectful attention from some of his countrymen; and thus, the Gospel, most probably, was first planted in Ethiopia. But we have no more scripture-light on the subject.

CHAPTER V.

CÆSAREA.

THE great mixture of Jews and Gentiles, in some of the extreme parts of the Holy Land or its neighbourhood, afforded a providential opportunity for the gradual illumination of the latter, for the abatement of Jewish bigotry, for the demonstration of Divine Grace in the salvation of all sorts of men, and for the union of Christian hearts. Thus we find that a Church was planted at Tyre, another at Ptolemais,† places which must have abounded with Gentiles. But Cæsarea affords the most remarkable instance of the observation just now made. It was the residence of the Roman Governor, and was so situated in the confines of Syria and Judea, that it was a matter of doubt to which region it ought to be assigned. And the final determination of this question in favour of the Syrians is mentioned by Josephus, as one of the immediate causes of the war, which ended

with the destruction of Jerusalem. This circumstance shows the great importance of this city, and the strong interest which both parties had in it.

Philip, after a laborious journey from Azotus, preaching in all the cities through which he passed, settled at length in Cæsarea. Here he was stationary for many years.* We find him, toward the conclusion of the period of about thirty years, still fixed in the same place, with four virgin daughters, where he entertained St. Paul in his last journey to Jerusalem. I can no more conceive Philip to have been idle and unfruitful all this time, than James to have been so at Jerusalem. A Church, mixed of Jews and Gentiles, would naturally be formed under so zealous a pastor, whose observation of the Grace of God in the case of the Eunuch, must have opened his mind to an affectionate reception of Gentile converts.

Indeed the abuse, which the malignant pride of the Jews had made of the Mosaic prohibition of intercourse with the Gentiles, was a great bar to the extension of the Gospel. They refused to keep company with foreigners, and seem to have looked on them as devoted to destruction. The Apostles themselves were, as yet, under the power of similar bigotry, till a vision from heaven instructed Peter, as he was praying on the house-top at Joppa, that he ought not to call any man common or unclean.† By this he was prepared for the work which the Lord was immediately assigning him. The Holy Spirit suggested to him that three men were at that time inquiring for him, and directed him to go with them; "for I have sent them."‡ Peter was soon informed by the men, that they had been sent to him from Cæsarea§ by Cornelius,

Cornelius sends for Peter.

* Acts viii. 40 : all compared with xxi. 3.

† Acts x.

‡ The proper personality and divinity of the Holy Ghost, and the unlimited subjection due to him from Christian pastors, and, of course, from all Christians, are solidly deducible from this and various similar passages in the Acts of the Apostles.

§ Much has been written concerning two sorts of Proselytes to the Jewish religion, circumcised ones, and incomplete ones, called Proselytes of the Gate. Two learned critics, Dr. Lardner and Dr. Doddridge, seem to have shown, however, that the latter had no existence. Cornelius was a Gentile altogether, and was treated as such by the Jews, though from

* Acts viii.

† Acts xxi.

a Roman centurion there, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his family, gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway; who had been warned from God by a holy angel to send for him.—Peter lodged the three men that night; two of them were household servants, and the third—rare character!—a devout soldier, who waited on the centurion continually.

On the next day Peter went with them, but had the precaution to take with him six Jewish Christians from Joppa as witnesses of his proceedings. The following day they entered Casarea, and came into the house of Cornelius, who had called together his kinsmen and near friends, with that charity for their souls, which fails not to influence the minds of those, who have real charity for their own. On the entrance of Peter he falls down and worships. Peter corrects his mistaken devotion. Cornelius informs him, that having been particularly engaged in fasting and prayer, he was assured by an angel that his prayers and alms were acceptable to God, and that he had obeyed the divine direction in sending for him. Peter now preached the Gospel to the company, frankly owning, that he was at length fully convinced, that God was no respecter of persons; but that he equally regarded Jew and Gentile, whoever the person was that “feared God, and wrought righteousness.” On this broad basis of encouragement, he was enabled to preach to them the good news of forgiveness of sins by Jesus Christ, whose history they knew, though they did not understand the nature of his doctrine. He directed them now to receive that doctrine cordially for their peace with God. The perfect holiness and the supernatural works of Jesus, he observed, demonstrated him to be no impostor, but sent of God unquestionably: that he himself and the other Apostles were witnesses of Christ’s resurrection, and had received a commission from him to preach to the people, and to urge men’s acceptance of him here, if ever they expected to be welcomed by him, when he should judge the quick and dead at his second coming; and that all the prophets had testified, that who-

ever placed his confidence for salvation in the name of Jesus Christ, should receive remission of sins.

Where God himself powerfully operates on the mind, few words suffice. The whole company were converted to God. The Holy Ghost, both in an extraordinary and in an ordinary way, sealed the Apostle’s sermon. The Jewish brethren were astonished to find Gentiles put on an equal footing with Jews. Peter, after observing how unreasonable it would be to deny baptism to persons who had received the Holy Ghost no less than themselves, baptized the whole company; and at their desire spent a few days with them, to instruct them farther in Christian principles; and then left them to the care of Philip, whose character at Casarea would probably from this time increase in public esteem.

A remark or two on this important transaction will be proper.

1. The Grace of God acts very variously in converting sinners. There are considerable shades of difference in the cases of Saul, of the Eunuch, and of Cornelius. The preaching of the Gospel found the first a determined enemy, the second an ignorant inquirer, the third a person already prepared by spiritual grace, though with no more than the Old Testament-light. But to all these different cases the doctrine itself is the same: and the work of God in humbling man for his sins, and leading him to Christ alone for justification, is the same also.

2. How necessary is it, that the way of peace by Jesus Christ only, be distinctly explained and understood! Cornelius, with an enlightened mind and a tender conscience, would never have found peace of conscience, unless he had understood the doctrine of forgiveness, by the blood of the Redeemer. Imperfections still attending his best actions, he must have remained miserable in his spirit. The doctrine of forgiveness, accompanied by the Holy Spirit, brought him at once to a peace before unknown. How careful should we be to understand this doctrine aright! how zealous, in proportion to our ability, to transmit the precious jewel to posterity!

3. How narrow are the hearts of men! how circumscribed the charity even of the best! With difficulty even Christian Jews are brought to admit as brethren the Gentile converts. Self-righteousness is natural to mankind. That God should

his pious attention to the Jewish religion he must have been at least a Proselyte of the second sort, if any ever were so. In that case it seems difficult to conceive, why any Jew should have made such a difficulty of conversing with persons of this description.

receive as his children idolatrous Gentiles, as well as religious Jews, provoked the pride of narrow-minded selfish men, who have long been accustomed to consider themselves as the peculiar favourites of heaven.

CHAPTER VI.

ANTIOCH AND SOME OTHER ASIATIC CHURCHES.

We have not yet seen all the good effects which Providence brought out of Stephen's persecution. Though the Apostles thought it their duty to continue to water the flocks of Judea and Galilee, and to look on Jerusalem as a sort of central metropolis to them all, they encouraged the inferior pastors, who fled from the rage of persecution, to disseminate the Gospel in Gentile regions. Damascus, we have seen, reaped the benefit of this dispensation, and so did Tarsus. Some travelled as far as Phenice, Cyrus, and Antioch, still preaching only to Jews. At length certain Cypriot and Cyrenian Jews ventured to break through the pale of distinction: and at Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, they preached the Lord Jesus to the Gentiles. The Greek language here prevailed, and, on this account, the inhabitants were called Grecians,* being the descendants of a Macedonian colony, planted there by the successor of Alexander the Great. And now the Lord, willing to overcome effectually the reluctances of self-righteous bigotry, attended their ministry with remarkable success. The idolaters felt the renovating power of the Gospel, and in great numbers turned to the Lord. The mother-church hearing of this, sent Barnabas, whose piety and charity were renowned, to carry on and propagate a work, which required more labourers. His benevolent heart was feasted with the prospect; and the reality of salvation by the grace of Christ thus exemplified in persons, who had hitherto been involved in pagan darkness, was evidenced in a manner which, till then, had never been known. Finding many converts, he exhorted them to perseverance; and the addition of believers was still so large, that he began to look out for a coadjutor. He sought for Saul, who was then labouring at Tarsus perhaps with no great success: we are told of

none at least; "for a prophet is not honoured in his own country;" and he brought him to Antioch. This populous city employed them a whole year. Here Christian societies were regularly formed, consisting, in a great measure, A. D. 40. of Gentiles. And here the followers of Christ were first called Christians. It is not probable, that they would give themselves that name. The terms BROTHERN, ELECT, FAITHFUL, SAINTS, were the names which they would rather approve. The name of Christian seems to have been given by their adversaries. It is now a term of honour; at that time a more opprobrious one could scarcely be thought of by the learned and the polite. Were a man allowed to possess many good qualities; "but he is a Christian," would have been deemed more than a counterbalance to them all. And other terms invented by the malevolence of unregenerate men, in different ages, to stigmatize the same sort of persons, have produced, by the bare sound, similar effects on prejudiced minds.

The faith of the Antiochians was signally operative. Warmed with the love of Christ, and rejoicing in the prospect of heavenly treasures, they cheerfully contributed to the relief of the poor Christians in Judea, distressed by a famine. A large extension of Christ's kingdom in any place, naturally calls together a large number of pastors. It is pleasant indeed to labour among the faithful, encircled with sincere friends. It is not every real saint, who has the fortitude and charity to quit so agreeable a scene, for the sake of breaking up fresh ground. How much longer these teachers would have remained at Antioch, if left to themselves, we know not. But the Holy Ghost now selected Barnabas and Saul for other labours. They obeyed the call; and Seleucia in the neighbourhood was their first destination. At this port they found a convenient passage to the fertile and voluptuous island of Cyprus. Methinks the evil spirits, who there supported the religious rites and the sensual practices of the devotees of Venus, began to tremble for this capital scene of their dominions.

From Salamis, the eastern point of the island, to Paphos the western, they spread the glad tidings of the Gospel. In this last place they found Elymas, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet, in company with Sergius Paulus, the Roman gover-

* Acts xi. 20.

nor of the island, a man of sense and candour, who sent for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. The sorcerer endeavoured to prevent the good effects of their labours; till Paul, full of holy indignation at his diabolical malice, was enabled miraculously to strike him blind for a season. Sergius was astonished, we are told, "at the doctrine" of the Lord,* and commenced a Christian from that hour.

The two Apostles sailed now to the adjoining continent, and arrived at Perga in Pamphylia. And here John Mark, who had thus far attended them as minister, left them and returned to Jerusalem. It was, perhaps, more agreeable to him to profess and practise Christianity at home with his mother and friends, than to expose himself to heathens. Even then, traces of the love of the world were to be seen among Christians.†

Psidia, lying to the north of Pamphylia, was the next scene. Here was another Antioch; and the Apostles on the Sabbath-day attended the Jewish synagogue. After the usual reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers gave them a friendly invitation to exhort the people, which Paul embraced with his usual zeal. His sermon is much of the same strain with those of Peter, and of Stephen, tending to beget in the hearers a conviction of sinfulness, and to give testimony to Jesus, concluding with a remarkably plain declaration of the grand doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus only, and a solemn warning against the dreadful consequences of hardness of heart, and of contempt of the divine message. The Gentiles, powerfully impressed with the new doctrine, desired to hear more of the subject the next Sabbath. Many Jews and proselytes were converted; and almost the whole city came on the next Sabbath-day to hear.‡ The sight was too much for the envy of the infidel Jews, who opposed Paul with all their might. The two Apostles boldly assured

them, that though it was their duty to carry the news of salvation to the Jews first, yet as they despised God's Gift of Eternal Life, it would now be offered to the Gentiles, agreeably to the glorious prophecy of Isaiah,* where the experimental influence of the Gospel on Gentile hearts is clearly described. The Pagans, not so proud as the Jews, felt that they had no righteousness to plead before God, thankfully embraced the Gospel, and believed in great numbers.

Psidia was now full of the Gospel; and the Apostles proceeded with vast success, till a persecution, stirred up by the Jews, induced some self-righteous women of rank, in conjunction with the magistrates, to drive them out of their coats. From thence they came to Iconium, the northern extremity of the country; and the disciples whom they left, though harassed with persecution, were yet "filled with Joy and the Holy Ghost." The internal consolation of their religion supported their souls. In Iconium the two Apostles continued a long time, and delivered the message of Divine Reconciliation with much freedom and energy, to the conversion of a great multitude both of Jews and Gentiles. The unbelieving Jews† exerted their usual malevolence, and filled the Gentiles with the strongest prejudices against the Christians. In truth, their conduct, though by no means uncommon, affords a dreadful instance of human depravity. It cannot be denied, that those Jews must in religious knowledge have far exceeded the idolatrous inhabitants of Iconium. They held the Unity of the Godhead; they worshipped him in their synagogue; they heard his precepts from Sabbath to Sabbath out of the law of Moses and the prophets. They must have known thus far, that the Messiah was foretold in the latter, and they could not but be acquainted with their duty both to God and man in many respects by means of the former. Yet so unreasonable are they, as to labour to prevent their pagan neighbours from being instructed in any thing that deserved the name of religion, and to persecute with unceasing acrimony two of their own countrymen, who agreed with them in the profession of the worship of the one living and true God. Of so little influence is what some call the "Unitarian" religion, if it be UNCONNECT-

* Acts xiii. 12. The expression is remarkable, but has a peculiar propriety. A mere historical believer would have been astonished at the miracle merely. Sergius, a true convert, who entered into the holy nature of the Gospel by a spiritual perception, is astonished "at the doctrine."

† Perhaps we are not sufficiently acquainted with the circumstances of the case, to form a fair judgment how far the conduct of John Mark is to be justified.

‡ Acts xiii. 44.

* 49th Chap.

† Acts xiv.

ED with the knowledge and Love of Jesus Christ. Persons, who make THAT the whole of their religion, can, it seems, rather see mankind remain buried in the depths of the most senseless idolatry in worship, and of vicious profligacy in life, than brought over to the real Christian religion, to the hearty renunciation of their own righteousness, and to a humble dependence on the atoning blood of Jesus! The preaching of Paul and Barnabas excited a variety of speculations in this city. The Gentiles were divided; and part ranged themselves with the Jews, and part with the Apostles. But the former had the advantage for the present, because they had the arms—which Christian soldiers cannot use—of violence and persecution.

The Apostles, aware of their designs, fled into Lycaonia, a country to the east of Pisidia; and there preached the Gospel, particularly in Lystra and Derbe. In the former of these places, a poor cripple, who never had had the use of his feet, heard Paul with the most respectful attention, and was so far wrought upon already in his mind, as to believe that there was virtue in the name of Jesus Christ to heal him. To confirm him in his yet infant views of the Christian religion, to attest the truth, and to convince men that Jesus was both able and willing to save, Paul was enabled by a word to restore the man to the full use of his limbs. Immediately these poor idolaters concluded, that the gods were come down to them in the likeness of men. Through this whole country of Asia Minor, the Greek literature, and with it the numerous fables of Hellenistic vanity, abounded. They had heard of Jupiter and Mercury particularly as visiting mankind; and now Barnabas, as the elder perhaps, and more majestic figure of the two, must, they conceived, be Jupiter; and Paul, as the more eloquent speaker, must be Mercury, the classical god of eloquence. The priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and, together with the people, would have done sacrifice to the Apostles. It was a grievous circumstance; but our grief and regret is mitigated, when we reflect that one of the finest opportunities was given to Paul and Barnabas of demonstrating the spirit of real godliness. However pleasing it might be to corrupt nature to receive the idolatrous* homage

of a deluded people, nothing could be more abhorrent from the nature of the Gospel itself, and from the humble character of its teachers. They could not bear the sight: they rent their clothes; and ran in among the people, and expostulated with them on the absurdity of their conduct; assuring them that they were no more than frail men like themselves, and that their intention in preaching to them was, to turn them from these vanities to the living God, who formerly indeed had left all nations to follow their own ways, but now had sent his servants to preach a method of salvation from such idolatries. Not that the worship of false gods was excusable; the constant benefits of Providence calling for thankfulness, and pointing out the Supreme Creator to the consciences of men. Thus faithfully did they preach conviction of sin to the Lycaonians, and with difficulty prevent the actual performance of the sacrifice, which would have given them more pain than the persecution that followed.

The fickle multitude, who had so recently been even idolatrously attached to Paul and Barnabas, were soon persuaded by some Jews, who came from Antioch and Iconium, to harbour the worst opinion of them; and, doubtless, the dislike of secular glory, which these excellent Apostles, with a truly Christian spirit, showed on all occasions, would not a little contribute to increase this alienation of mind. In a tumult Paul was stoned, and dragged out of the city, as a dead corpse; and while the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city, miraculously restored, as it seems: and he departed the next day with Barnabas to Derbe. There many were converted; and the persecuting spirit intermitting, they visited again, in circuit, the regions of Pisidia and Lycaonia, encouraging the disciples to persevere in the faith of Jesus in confidence of divine support, and in full expectation of the kingdom of heaven, into which real Christians must not expect to enter without much tribulation.

They now ordained some of the brethren

contrast with this behaviour of the Apostles the audacious arts of Jesuit missionaries, and to regret the want of a similar piety and integrity in a late celebrated naval commander in a scene of trial of the same kind, which happened a little before his lamented catastrophe.

* The historical reader can scarcely fail to

to minister in every Church, and devoutly recommended both pastors and flocks to the care of that gracious Lord on whom they believed: Solemn fasting and prayer were used on this occasion. Returning through Pamphylia, they preached again at Perga, and from Attalia sailed to the great Antioch, whence they had been, by the prayers of the Church, recommended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled.

Here they remained a considerable time previous to their attendance at the Council of Jerusalem, after which they returned to the same Church in company with Judas and Silas, who, with authority from the mother-church, confirmed them in the liberty of the Gospel, in conjunction with many other teachers. The Christians of Antioch walked now in genuine consolation, and while they dared to rest on Christ alone, they practised good works in a filial spirit. Thankful for the assistance of Judas and Silas, they dismissed them to the Apostles who had sent them.* Silas, however, loved his situation, and remained in the service of the Gentiles.

Some days after, Paul proposed to Barnabas a second circuitous visit of the Asiatic Churches. Barnabas, fond of

Contest
between
Paul and
Barnabas.

Mark, his nephew, proposed to take him with them. Paul, remembering his former desertion, thought him unfit for the work. On which side

there was more blame in this contest, may be hard to determine. Probably both were too positive; but to us, at this distance of time, Paul's view of the question seems the most just. The consequence was a separation between these two Christian leaders; and it does not appear that they ever saw one another afterwards, though it ought not to be doubted, but that, on the whole, their mutual esteem and regard continued: the best men are but men. The progress of the Gospel was not, however, retarded. Barnabas sailed with Mark to Cyprus, and here he is dismissed from the sacred memoirs. Paul took with him Silas, having the recommendation of the brethren to the Grace of God, which would lead one to conclude, that the Antiochians preferred his cause to that of Barnabas. He now went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches.

In Lycaonia, he found the pious Timo-

thy, whom he took as an associate, and confirmed the Gentile converts every where in Christian Liberty: Thus the Churches were established in the faith, and increased in number daily.

CHAPTER VII.

GALATIA.

THE Love of God, where it rules in an ardent degree, is insatiable. The Apostle's heart is not content with the trophies already erected in many parts of Asia Minor. As the miser thinks no acquisitions great, while any prospects of farther gain are still open to his view, so Paul could not with complacency rest in the attainments already made, while so much ground still lay before him, to the north and to the west, in the hands of Satan. He travelled throughout Phrygia and Galatia.* The plantation of the Churches in the former country will afterwards engage our attention; the latter, whose history in point of time is much sooner concluded in sacred story, will be now most conveniently exhibited. The epistle written to that Church affords us almost the only materials we have; but little as they are, they are inestimable. I am entirely convinced by Dr. Lardner,† that this was an early epistle, and by no means dated from Rome, as the subscription at the end of the epistle intimates. Nor is this the only place in which those subscriptions, which the unlearned reader should know make no part of the Apostolical writings, deceive us.

The people of this country received the Gospel in great numbers, insomuch that several Churches were planted through the district. They understood St. Paul's doctrine, and received it in its true sense, namely, that justification before God is attainable only by faith in Christ crucified. He clearly laid before them the riches of Divine Grace. And they had so deep an impression of the truths, which he taught, and felt so much of their energy, that they seemed as it were to see the Son of God crucified among them:‡ they received the promised Spirit of adoption, by which they rejoiced in God as their Father,§ and they cheerfully suffered much persecution for the name of Christ.|| Before this, they had lived

* Acts xv. 33.

• Acts xvi. 6.

† See his Supplement.

‡ Gal. iii. 1.

§ Ib. iv. 6.

|| Ib. iii. iv.

in the darkest idolatry; for these Churches were formed almost, if not entirely, of Gentiles.* The true God was made known to them, and Unitarianism, of itself unable to emancipate men from sin, as the case of the Jews evinced, was with them attended with the distinct knowledge and lively faith of Jesus.

What proves the divine taste of this people was, that no disadvantage in the circumstances of the delivery of the Gospel operated with them to its prejudice. Some remarkable infirmity this great man was afflicted with;—what it was precisely we are no where told;—but it presented something contemptible in the eyes of pr- fane persons. And it is no small proof of the Galatians being much humbled and awakened in their minds by the Spirit of God, that this circumstance lessened not at all their regard to the Apostle or to his message. "They received him as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus."† They confessed the blessedness, which they felt on account of the Gospel, and were ready to give even the most painful proofs of their affection to him. In all this we see, what the Gospel is, what it does for men who truly understand and embrace it in an humble heart, what was St. Paul's manner of preaching, and how different a thing Christianity then appeared from the frigid speculations which in modern times bear that name.

But soon after Paul had left them with the most pleasing hopes of their spiritual growth, he was astonished to hear of a change for the worse, which took place among them. Some Jews, who were either their own countrymen, or who had lately arrived at Galatia from other parts of Asia Minor where Paul had laboured, took pains to pervert them. They made no attempts indeed to unsettle their minds in the views of the unity of the Godhead, and the principal facts of Christianity; nor did they endeavour to draw them back to the worship of idols. They neither formally denied the atonement of Christ, nor persuaded the people to desert from Christian worship. Yet was it another gospel, though it deserved not the name of Gospel;‡ to the love of which they submitted them. They assured them, that they could not be saved without circumcision, and prevailed on them to renounce so far, as to observe the rites of Moses in

various instances.* They took pains to estrange them from Paul, and to draw them over to themselves, and to a worldly spirit of conformity, loving to appear far in the eyes of men, and pretending to be zealous for good works, while their real view was to avoid the persecution, which attended the Cross of Christ.† To give the better effect to their insinuations, they instilled into them disrespectful ideas of Paul, as though he were far inferior to the other Apostles: and, as it seems, they represented the mother-church of Jerusalem, with the college of Apostles there, as coinciding with themselves in doctrine.

Thus the self-righteous poison, which first issued from Jerusalem, was brought into this distant province, where the ignorance and simplicity of the people, unacquainted with Jewish modes and habits, gave it the freest room to operate. These false teachers still called themselves Christians, and the mischief which they introduced, may be deemed at first sight no great one. So, I doubt not, some fashionable perversions of Evangelical truth at this day, of a similar kind, appear to many to be of no great consequence. I am not, however, to disguise that this Galatian delusion appears strongly to resemble the perversions to which I allude. I have represented things as they appear to me from the epistle. The great evil lurking under all this art and zeal was the adulteration of the faith of Jesus, the sole Author of our salvation. In no epistle does the Apostle speak so sharply, or express himself so vehemently. His exhortation and rebuke came warm from a charitable heart, just after the reception of the disagreeable tidings. He professes himself astonished at the defection of the Galatians from Christ; and exhortes any man or even angel, who should preach any other way of salvation. If such a person still call himself a Christian, and hold the historical facts of the Gospel, the case is not altered for the better; the deception only passing more current on that account.‡ He asserts, that if they mixed circumcision, or any work of the law, with Christ in the article of justification, Christ would be of no effect to them.§ He must be their whole Saviour, or he would profit them nothing; law and grace in this case being quite opposite.

* Galat. iv. 10.
Vol. I.

† iv. 14.
E

‡ i. 6, 7.

* Galat. iv. 10.
1 Chap. i.

† vi. 12.
6 Chap. v.

He marks the mere worldly nature of the doctrine they were embracing;* it would make them bigotted Jews indeed, proud, self-righteous, void of the love of God and man,† and no better in their spiritual state than they were while idolaters.‡ Thus they would lose all the liberty of the Gospel, and be mere slaves in religion, like all unconverted persons, who in reality are self-righteous, and devoid of holy principle. He points out to them the peculiar nature of the Gospel, as perfectly distinct from any thing that man in his depraved state is apt to teach or ready to embrace. In the historical part of the epistle he vindicates his own Apostolical character, inculcates throughout, in all possible variety of language, and with his usual copiousness both of clear argument and strong diction, the all-important article of justification, and presses the necessity of continuing in it, in order to be benefited by it. Otherwise we make Christ the minister of sin, or of condemnation: we build again what we have destroyed; and as far as in us lies, make him to have died in vain. He appeals to their own experience of the happy fruits of the Gospel, which they had felt internally, and represents himself as travelling in birth for them, till Christ be formed in them. He expresses himself dubious of their condition, and desirous of visiting them, that he might adapt his language to their perilous situation. He wishes that their evil advisers were cut off, so mischievous were they to souls; and assures them, that the Divine Vengeance would overtake those that troubled them. He informs them, that the persecution, which he himself endured, was on account of this very doctrine. This it was that stirred up the enmity of the human heart; and this doctrine being lost, the Gospel becomes a mere name, and Christianity is lost in the group of common religions.

It will be proper for us to bear in mind the Apostle's reasonings on this subject, and to apply them to every period of Church-history; since it is evident, that the rise or fall of this great Christian article, must determine the vigour or decline of true religion in all ages. He neglects not, however, to inculcate in his usual manner the necessity of good works, as the just fruits and evidences of

a real Christian state;§ and he particularly encourages them to works of mercy, attended with a patient and cheerful prospect into eternity, and animated with genuine charity.¶

There is reason to hope, that the best effects were produced by the epistle. No very long time after, the Apostle again visited these Churches, and went over the whole country, strengthening "all the disciples."‡ This is the substance of what I can collect from Scripture concerning the history of this Church,—except a single hint in another epistle,§ in which he recommends to the Corinthians to use the same plan for the relief of the poor saints, which he had suggested to the Galatians. From the influence which he hence appears to have had in Galatia, it is probable, that the Judaical perversion was overcome.

CHAPTER VIII.

PHILIPPI.

THE dispensation of the Gospel is doubtless the greatest blessing that can be vouchsafed to any country. But the times and the seasons God hath reserved to himself. Even in this sense salvation is of grace; and Divine Providence alone orders and appoints, that the Gospel shall be preached here or there, as he pleases. Paul and Silas, if left to themselves, in their progress to the west, would have evangelized Pergamus or Asia propria and Bithynia,|| but were prevented by special intimations of the Holy Spirit. They came now to Troas,—so called from its being the place, or near the place, where old Troy had stood, by the sea-coast,—uncertain whither they should go next, and perhaps little apprehensive that God, now for the first time, was introducing his Gospel into Europe. A nightly vision, in which a Macedonian intreated Paul to come over into his country and help them, determined at once their destination. They sailed from Troas to the island of Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis, a Macedonian sea-port, whence, through the gulf of Strymon, they came to Philippi, the first city of that part of Macedonia, which they would meet with in their way from Neapolis.

* Chap. vi., towards the end.
† iv. 9.

† Chap. v.

* Chap. v., toward the end.

‡ Acts xviii. 23.

§ Acts xvi. 7.

† Chap. vi.

§ 1 Cor. xvi. 1.

So I understand St. Luke's expression *Illyris*; for Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. The city of Philippi, though originally Macedonian, and so named from Philip the father of Alexander, was then a Roman colony, inhabited by Roman citizens, and regulated by Roman laws and customs. The region in which it stood, had been renowned for constituting the third of the four great monarchies under the arms of Alexander, and the place itself had been, something more than half a century ago, the scene of a famous battle, between two Roman parties engaged in a civil war. Neither of those seasons would have been at all convenient for the Gospel. The present was a scene of tranquillity and order under the Roman government: and Macedonia, though now only a Roman province, was going to be the subject of transactions infinitely more noble than those, which adorn the history of its greatest princes.

The appearances on their arrival did not promise any thing remarkable. They spent a few days at first with little prospect of success. They found a few Jews there, who used on the Sabbath day to frequent an oratory out of the city by the river side: and some women, religiously disposed, resorted thither. It was the constant method of the Apostles to join themselves to Unitarians, wherever they could find them, as the first opening for the Gospel of Christ. They did so on this occasion, and spake to the women. One of them was Lydia, a person of some property. Her heart the Lord opened, that "she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul." She was baptized with her family; and with affectionate importunity she prevailed on the Apostle and his companions to make her house their home in Philippi. Here we have the beginnings of the Philippian Church; but the conversion was sound and stable, and the progress of Lydia in the divine life seems of the same kind as that of Cornelius. Vexed at the prospect, Satan employed a young woman possessed with a spirit of Python to bring the Gospel into contempt if possible. She constantly followed the Christian preachers, and bore them the most honourable testimony. Paul was grieved, as being fully sensible of the ill effect, which a supposed union between Christ and Python* must occasion in the minds of men.

He was at length enabled miraculously to eject the demon. The proprietors of the young woman, who had made a traffic of her oracular powers, finding that she was dispossessed of the demon, wreaked their vengeance on Paul and Silas, and by slanderous accusations induced the magistrates to scourge them severely, and to commit them to prison. The jailer thrust them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

In this situation, distressing indeed, and in the eyes of many contemptible, these two servants of God, at midnight, though oppressed with pain and hunger, and every disagreeable circumstance, were yet enabled to pray and sing praises to God. So powerful are the consolations of the Holy Ghost, and so much did the love of Christ constrain them! And now the Lord caused a great earthquake, which opened all the doors of the prison, and loosed every one's bonds. The jailer awaking, in his first trepidation, by a practice which I wish had been creditable among Pagans only, was about to destroy himself. Paul kindly assured him that none of the prisoners had escaped. And now being struck with horror at the thought of the world to come, to which he had been hastening in all his guilt, and being divinely convinced of his danger, he came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and asked what he must do to be saved. The answer was plain and direct. Why do any persons who call themselves Christian ministers ever give any other? "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house." They then instructed him and his household in the nature of the Gospel, and opened to him the doctrine of forgiveness of sins by the blood of Christ. His conversion appears evidently of the same kind, as that of the three thousand at Jerusalem. He was humbled for his sins, and he received pardon by faith in Jesus. His ready submission to baptism, his affectionate treatment of those, who had just before been the objects of his severity, and his joy in the Lord, demonstrated, that he was turned from Satan to

the oracular work of the Pythian Apollo among the Pagans had something diabolical in it; and the story before us demonstrates the reality of such delusions, and that human fraud and sagacity alone are not sufficient to account for them.

* The very term leads me to apprehend, that

God.—His whole family shared with him in the same blessings.

In the morning the magistrates sent an order for the dismissal of the prisoners. But Paul thought it not inconsistent with Christian meekness, to demand from them an apology for their illegal behaviour to Roman citizens; for such it seems Silas was, as well as Paul. The magistrates, alarmed, came personally to make concessions, which were easily accepted. Being dismissed from prison, they entered into Lydia's house, comforted the disciples, and left Philippi for the present.

Some years after the Apostle again visited the Philippians, and found them still in a flourishing state. He always took a peculiar pleasure in this Church; and, in his epistle written from Rome, he thanks God for their sincere fellowship in the Gospel from the beginning. He expresses his expectation of liberty, and of being enabled to see them again, and exhorts them to bear patiently the persecutions to which they were exposed, as being an evidence of the divine favour.*

Liberality was a shining virtue among these converts. They had sent once and again to his relief at Thessalonica.† And now they had sent Epaphroditus to Rome, to minister to his wants. A dangerous illness had brought that disciple to the borders of the grave. Upon his recovery he was afflicted to think of the distress, which the news of his sickness must have brought on the minds of the Philippians. Paul was therefore the more anxious to send him back. The sensibility of that love, with which the Holy Ghost had influenced all concerned in this affair, is finely described in this part of the epistle.‡ The Apostle, toward the close of it, even exults in the pleasure which the charity of these disciples gave him; and he assures them, that his God would “supply all their need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” He warns them however against the dangers of seduction. Judaizing teachers desired to pervert them. He reminds them, therefore,§ of his own simple dependence on the Lord Jesus, though he had fairer pretensions than most men to self-righteousness; and with tears in his eyes declares, that, even then, many pretended Chris-

tians walked like enemies of the Cross of Christ.

Such was the work of God at Philippi. A considerable number of persons, once worshippers of idols, devoted to the basest lusts, and sunk in the grossest ignorance, were brought to the knowledge and love of the true God, and to the hope of salvation by his Son Jesus. In this faith and hope they persevered amidst a world of persecutions, steadily brought forth the fruits of charity, and lived in the joyful expectation of a blessed resurrection.

CHAPTER IX.

THESSALONICA.

OF Amphipolis and Apollonia, the next cities of Macedonia through which St. Paul passed, nothing particular is recorded. But at Thessalonica another European Church was formed inferior in solid piety to none in the primitive times. This city had been rebuilt by Philip of Macedon, and had its name from his conquest of Thessaly. Here Paul followed his usual practice of preaching first to the Jews in their synagogue; and he spent the first three Sabbaths in pointing out the evidences of Christianity. The custom of the Jews in allowing any of their countrymen to exhort in their synagogues, gave the Apostle an easy opportunity of preaching to this people, till their accustomed enmity and obstinacy began to exert itself. Some of the Jews were however converted,* and a great multitude of religious Gentiles who used to attend the synagogue, and not a few females of quality. So difficult is it for even Satan himself to erase all perception of the one true God from the minds of men, so powerful is the voice of natural conscience, and so totally unreasonable is the polytheism of the Pagans, that notwithstanding the extreme depravity of human nature, we find, wherever the Jews carried on the public worship of the God of Israel, it was common for some Gentiles to join in their worship. Within the bounds of the Holy Land there were a number of this sort. And I observe through the whole tenour of Josephus's history, that the Romans treated with respect what the Jews held sacred; and whoever was distinguished by any religious thoughtfulness from others, such a

* Philip. i. 23, 29.

† Philip. iv. 16.

‡ Chap. ii., toward the end.

§ Chap. iii.

* Acts xvii.

one found nothing to suit him in Gentile rites, but preferred the worship of the Jews. The devout Greeks converted at Thessalonica were of this class; and this is not the first instance we have seen of the Lord's preparing persons, by an attention to a more imperfect light, for the Sun of Righteousness. But HE is not confined to one method. The major part of the Thessalonian converts were idolaters,* who now turned to the living and true God, in the faith and hope of Jesus, who "delivered them from the wrath to come." Faith, hope, and charity evinced this people to be God's elect: the word came to their hearts in much power and assurance; and, though it exposed them to great affliction, this did not prevent their joy of the Holy Ghost.

The restless Jews were not ashamed to join with the most profligate Pagans in persecuting the new converts; and decent hypocrites and open sinners were, once more, seen united in opposing the Church of God. They assaulted the house of Jason, at whose house Paul and his companions were entertained. Precautions having been used to secrete them, Jason and some other Christians were brought before the magistrates, and calumniated with the usual charge of sedition. The Roman governors, however, were content with exacting a security from Jason and his friends for the peace of the state. But the Apostle knew too well the malice of the Jews to confide in any present appearances of their moderation; and therefore felt himself obliged abruptly to leave the infant Church. The first epistle, however, which he sent to them, not long after, plainly proves that they were not without pastors, whom he charges them to honour and obey.†

The growth of this people in godliness was soon renowned through the Christian world. Their persecution appears to have been grievous; and hence the comfort of God their Saviour, and the prospect of the invisible world, became more precious to them. The Apostle made two attempts to return to them, but was as often disappointed by the malice of Satan.‡ Fearing, lest the weight of affliction might crush their religion in its infancy, he sent Timothy to them, to establish and comfort them. From§ him, on his return, he learnt the strength of

their faith and love, and their affectionate remembrance of the Apostle, whose benevolent effusions of joy and gratitude on the occasion exceed all encomium. The influence of the Holy Spirit in enlightening, comforting, and invigorating this Church, seemed in a good measure to supply any want of pastoral instruction, in which, from their circumstances, they might probably be defective. They were taught of God to love one another, and they exercised this brotherly affection in the strongest manner toward all around.*

Fornication indeed was a sin so commonly practised among the Gentiles, without the least suspicion of its evil, that Paul thought proper to warn them against it expressly and distinctly.†

In his second epistle he congratulates them on their great proficiency in faith and love: and while he comforts them with the prospect of the second coming of Christ, he takes occasion to correct a mistake, into which they had fallen from what he had mentioned in his former epistle, of imagining that the last day was at hand. Men, who had suddenly passed from the grossest ignorance, into the full blaze of Gospel-day, might easily make such a mistake, especially since their affections were now so strongly captivated with heavenly objects, and since they found so little in a world of persecution to cheer their minds. There appears only one fault in this people which he thought necessary to rebuke. He intimated something‡ of it in the former epistle, in the latter he was more express.§ It was the want of industry in their callings, with which he charged some of them; for this was not a general evil. How they might fall into it, is easy to conceive. Persons all alive for God and his Christ, and knowing little of the deceitfulness of the heart, and of the crafts of Satan, might find it irksome to attend to the concerns of this life. It was a fault indeed, and very dangerous, if persisted in; but as it was, in all probability, soon corrected, and in part occasioned by the strength of heavenly affections, one cannot be very severe in censuring them. ||

It may be worth while for those, who feel themselves much irritated against similar evils attendant on the effusion of the Holy Spirit in our days, to consider

* 1 Thess. i. 9.
† ii. 13.

‡ 1 Thess. v.
§ iii. 9, 10.

* 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10.
† iv. 11, 12.

‡ iv. 3-9.
§ 2 Thess. iii. 11.

whether they do not exercise more candour towards the Thessalonians, than they do towards those, who are actually walking in their steps; whether they are not apt to respect the former as real Christians, and to scorn the latter as deluded enthusiasts!

This Church bears the strongest signatures of godliness, the effect of no common effusion of the Spirit. They adorned the Gospel, with faith, hope, and charity; yet showed, by their faults and ignorance, the importance of diligent and much pastoral instruction, in which their circumstances suffered them not to abound; and which, under God, would have soon cured the former, and removed the latter.

They were exposed to such blemishes, as are most apt to attend great attainments in the divine life made with vast rapidity.

It appears, that St. Paul visited this people a considerable time after, and gave them much exhortation; but we have no particular further account of them.*

CHAPTER X.

BEREA AND ATHENS.

PAUL WAS conducted from Thessalonica to Berea, a city of Macedonia. Here also was a Jewish synagogue, and here, for the first time, the preaching of the Cross was candidly received by Jews. A very singular character is given of the Jews of this place;—they possessed a liberality of mind, which disposed them to listen with attention, and to search the Scriptures of the Old Testament with daily assiduity. The grace of God seems to have prepared these persons for the Gospel; and Paul had the pleasure to find a number of the stamp of Cornelius, who were groping their way to happiness, and were ready to hail the light as soon as it should dawn upon them. Many Jews of Berea believed, and not a few

Gentiles also of both sexes: those of the female sex were persons of quality. The rage of the Thessalonian Jews soon however disturbed this pleasing scene, and stirred up a persecution, which obliged the Christians to use some art in saving the Apostle's life. His conductors at first took the road toward the sea, which might lead the persecutors to suppose he had quitted the continent. They then brought him safe to Athens,* once the first city of Greece in all views, and still renowned for taste and science, the school in which the greatest Romans studied philosophy. Here, while he waited for the arrival of Silas and Timothy, he beheld the monuments of the city with other eyes than those of a scholar and a gentleman. No place in the world could more have entertained a curious and philosophical spirit than this. Temples, altars, statues, historical memorials, living philosophers of various sects, books of those who are deceased, a confluence of polite and humanized persons of various countries, enjoying the luxury of learned leisure,—these things must at once have obtruded themselves on his notice: and no man in any age, by strength of understanding, warmth of temper, and justness of taste, seems to have been more capable of entering into the spirit of such scenes than Saul of Tarsus. But Divine Grace had given his faculties a very different direction; and the Christian in him predominated extremely above the philosopher and the critic. He saw here, that even the excess of learning brought men no nearer to God. No place on earth was more given to idolatry. He could not therefore find pleasure in the classical luxuries presented before him: he saw his Maker disgraced, and souls perishing in sin. Pity and indignation swallowed up all other emotions: and ministers of Christ, by their own sensations in similar scenes, may try how far they are possessed of the mind of Paul, which, in this case, certainly was the mind of Christ. If affections be lively, some exertions will follow. He laid open the reasons of Christianity to Jews in their synagogue, also to Gentile worshippers, who attended the synagogue, and, daily, to any persons whom he met with in the forum. There were two sects very opposite to one another among the pagan philoso-

* In the first epistle he "charges them by the Lord," that it be "read to all the holy brethren." As this seems to have been his first epistle, and indeed the newest part of the whole New Testament, the solemnity of the abjuration (*ἀνάθεμα*) has a peculiar propriety, as Dr. Lardner observes. The Thessalonians were no doubt disposed to receive it as matter of apostolical inspiration, and the importance of bringing every Christian to be well acquainted with the word of God is fairly inferred.

* Acts xvii.

phers, namely, the Epicureans and the Stoics. The former placed the chief good in pleasure, the latter in, what they called, virtue, correspondent to the two chief sects among the Jews, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, and indeed to the two sorts among mankind in all ages, who yet are in a state of nature, namely, men of a licentious and dissipated turn of mind on the one hand, and on the other self-righteous persons who substitute their own reason and virtue in the room of divine grace and divine influence. As these will in any age unite against the real friends of Jesus Christ, so it was here: the Apostle appeared a mere babler in their eyes. Jesus and the resurrection, which he preached, were ideas, from which their minds were so abhorrent, that they took them for a new god and goddess.

It belonged to the court of Areopagus to take cognizance of things of this nature. This court had unjustly condemned the famous Socrates, as if he had depreciated the established religion, though he had given as strong proofs of his polytheistic attachments as he had of philosophical pride. It ought not however to be denied, that in a lower sense he suffered for righteousness' sake. His honest rebukes of vice and improbity exposed him to death;—so unsafe is even the least approximation to goodness in a world like this. That St. Paul escaped condemnation here, seems owing to peculiar circumstances. The court, under the tolerating maxims of its Roman superior, seems now to have had only the privilege of examining tenets as a synod, without the penal power of magistracy.*

It would carry me too far to dwell on the excellent apology of Paul delivered before this court. He reprov'd their idleness in language and by arguments perfectly classical; and he announced as much of the Gospel, as was adapted to the very ignorant state of his audience. Whoever duly examines this short masterpiece of eloquence, may see that he labours to lead in them the spirit of conviction, and to prepare them for Gospel-mirery, just as Peter did in his first sermon at Jerusalem. The means used

by the two Apostles are as different, as the circumstances of a Jewish and Athenian audience were: The end aimed at by both was the same.

There is reason to apprehend, that God never suffers the plain and faithful denunciation of his Gospel to be altogether fruitless. A few persons believed in reality and with steadfastness, among whom was Dionysius, a member of the court, and a woman named Damaris. These Paul left to the care of that gracious God who had opened their eyes, and he departed from a city as yet too haughty, too scornful, and too indifferent concerning things of infinite moment, to receive the Gospel. A church could hardly be said to be formed here, though a few individuals were converted. The little success at Athens evinces that a spirit of literary trifling in religion, where all is theory, and the conscience is unconcerned, hardens the heart effectually. What a contrast between the effects of the same Gospel dispensed to the illiterate Macedonians, and the philosophical Athenians! Yet there want not many professing Christians, who, while they stigmatize men of the former sort with the name of barbarians, bestow on the latter the appellation of enlightened philosophers.

CHAPTER XI.

CORINTH.

CORINTH WAS, at this period, the metropolis of Greece. Its situation in an isthmus rendered it remarkably convenient for trade. It was the residence of the Roman governor of Achaia, the name then given to all Greece; and it was, at once, full of opulence, luxury, and sensuality. Hither the Apostle came from Athens, and laboured both among the Jews and the Gentiles. Here Providence favoured him with the acquaintance and friendship of Aquila and his wife Priscilla, two Jewish Christians lately expelled from Italy with other Jews, by an edict of the emperor Claudius. With them he wrought as a tent-maker, being of the same occupation: for every Jew, whether rich or poor, was obliged to follow some trade. After the arrival of Silas and Timothy, the Apostle with much vehemence preached to his countrymen; but opposition and abuse were the only

* In this however I am not very positive: A greater degree of temporal indifference might, in the progress of refinement, have prevailed at Athens in the days of St. Paul, and the court might itself be as little disposed to persecute, as the Roman powers.

returns he met with. The modern notions of charity will scarcely be reconciled to the zealous indignation which he showed on this occasion. He shook his garment, and told them, that he was clear of their destruction; and that he would leave them, and apply himself to the Gentiles in the city. With this denunciation he left the synagogue, and entered into the house of one Justus, a devout person, well affected to the Gospel. Crispus also the ruler of the synagogue, with his whole family, received the truth. But we hear of no more Jewish converts at this place. However, many Corinthians were converted. And a gracious vision of the Lord Jesus* who said to Paul in the night, "I have much people in this city," encouraged him to continue here a year and half.—The rage of the Jews would doubtless be raised to the highest pitch; but, as usual, the moderate spirit of the Roman government prevented its sanguinary exertions. Gallio the proconsul, brother of the famous Seneca, was perfectly indifferent concerning the progress of Christianity, and refused to pay the least attention to their complaints against Paul, who now found himself so effectually preserved from the fury of his countrymen, that he remained in Corinth a considerable time longer than the above-mentioned year and a half. After his departure, Apollos, a zealous and eloquent Alexandrian Jew, came to this city, and was made a very powerful instrument of building up this Church, and of silencing the opposition of the Jews. The modesty of this man was as conspicuous as his spirit. Till he was instructed more perfectly by Aquila and Priscilla, he knew no more of Christianity, than what was contained in the system of John the Baptist. That so able a man could submit to profit by others, was a proof of an humble frame.

It appears, that St. Paul, so far as circumstances admitted, kept up a constant correspondence with the Churches. The care of them, as he says, "came upon him daily." The Corinthians wrote to him to ask his advice on some cases of conscience; and he understood that a variety of evils and abuses had crept in among them. On these accounts he wrote the two epistles to the Corinthians. In reviewing them, we are astonished to find how faulty many persons of this

Church were; and the scene, which they exhibit, more resembles modern than primitive times, in a variety of circumstances. It falls not within the design of this history to enlarge. Former writers have, with more than sufficient accuracy, detailed the evils; let one at least be allowed briefly to record the good things of the Church of Christ. In regard to the people of Corinth, their exemption from persecution under Gallio, and their state of ease and prosperity, so uncommon with other Churches, in a great measure account for the little spirituality which they manifested. Perhaps no Church was more numerous, and none less holy in the Apostolic age. And it may teach us not to repine at the want of the MIRACULOUS operations of the Holy Spirit, when we consider that these Corinthians abounded in them. But many of them were proud of gifts, contentious, self-conceited, and warm partisans of Paul, Apollos, or Peter; and by the indulgence of this sectarian spirit, showed how little they had learned of true wisdom, which gives the Apostle occasion* to recommend the wisdom that is from above, to point out the nature and properties of spiritual understanding, and to pour a just contempt on that which is merely natural.

With the pride of false wisdom they joined a very blameable neglect in practice. One of their Church lived in incest, and the offender was not excommunicated.† St. Paul rebukes them also for thier litigiousness and lasciviousness.‡ In answer to their queries, he recommends celibacy as preferable to matrimony where a man can practise it, and that I think from general reasons,§ as more favourable to holiness, without however depreciating matrimony, or giving the least countenance to the flood of monastic abuses, which afterwards prevailed in Christendom. But mankind are ever prone to extremes; and the extreme which is opposite to superstition so much prevails at present, that I should not wonder, if some persons should startle at what I have mentioned as the sentiments of St. Paul, though it be almost impossible for any unprejudiced person to understand him otherwise.

So little were the Corinthians exposed to persecution, that they were invited by their idolatrous neighbours to partake of

* Acts xviii.

* 1 Cor. four first chapters. † Chap. v.

‡ Chap. vi.

§ Chap. vii.

their idol feasts; and there were among them those who complied.* There were also among them false apostles, who, by pretending to instruct them gratis, endeavoured to depreciate Paul as a mercenary person.† Hence, while he rebukes the faults or defects of this people, he observes that he laboured among them freely, which the false apostles pretended to do. He proceeds to correct an abuse which obtained in their assemblies, in the article of decency of dress; and another much worse,—the profanation of the Lord's Supper.‡ He insists also on the correction of their abuse of spiritual gifts, particularly those of languages.§ It appears that gifts were more prized by them, in some respects, than grace itself; and that love, which he beautifully describes, was at a low ebb among them. He occasionally mentions, however, a very common effect attendant on the preaching of the Gospel even at Corinth: If an ignorant idolater came into their assemblies, he was so penetrated with the display of the truth as it is in Jesus, that he could not but discover the very secrets of his soul; he would prostrate himself in the worship of God, and report that God was in them of a truth.|| And, if where the Gospel was so little honoured by the lives of its professors as at Corinth, such power attended the dispensation of it, how much more of the same kind, may we suppose, happened at Philippi and at Thessalonica! For we have not yet mentioned all the evils of this outwardly flourishing, but inwardly distempered Church. There were some, who even denied the resurrection of the body, which gives occasion to the Apostle to illustrate that important article.¶

Though he had promised to revisit them soon, yet in the next epistle, he assigns a reason why he delayed longer than he had intended. Their Christian state was very imperfect; and he wished to be enabled, by their reformation, to come among

them with more pleasure. In truth, he wrote the first epistle in much anguish and affliction.* His soul was deeply affected for this people, and while great progress in profession seemed so inconsistent with their experience and their practice, he felt the sincerest grief. He was relieved at length by the coming of Titus,† from whose account it appeared, that the admonitions were by no means fruitless. The case of the incestuous person at length was attended to by them as it ought: they proceeded even with more severity than the Apostle desired; for, though the man gave the strongest proof of repentance, they refused to readmit him into their Church, till St. Paul signified his express desire that they would do so.

There can be no doubt but that many persons belonging to this Church were recovered to a state of affection and practice worthy of Christianity. In particular the Apostle commends their liberality towards the distressed Christians.‡ But there was still an obstinate party among the Corinthians, attached to the false apostles, whose conduct extorted from him a zealous and honest commendation of himself, his endowments, and his office, which yet he manages with great address and delicacy, while he bewails the scandalous practices still existing among them.§

On his arrival at Corinth after these epistles, he doubtless executed what he had threatened, namely, some wholesome severities on offenders, unless their speedy and sincere repentance prevented the necessity of such a step. He spent three months|| in his second visit. But we have no particular account in Scripture of this Church.

CHAPTER XII.

ROME.

It may seem to have been purposely appointed by Infinite Wisdom, that our first accounts of the Roman Church should be very imperfect, in order to confute the proud pretensions to universal dominion, which its bishops have with unblushing arrogance supported for so many ages. If a line or two in the Gospels concerning the keys of St. Peter have been made

* 1 Cor. viii. 10.

† 1 Cor. ix., compared with 2 Cor. xi. 13-20.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. § Chap. xii. xiii. xiv.

|| This is a proof of the Divine Influence attendant on Christianity. General prints of its authenticity may be drawn also from the subject of miraculous gifts. The Apostle's manner of describing these things proves their reality and their frequency. For no man could have convinced these Corinthians, that they were in possession of those gifts, if they themselves had not been conscious of them.

¶ 1 Cor. xv.

* 2 Cor. ii. 4.

† 2 Cor. vii.

‡ 2 Cor. ix.

§ Chap. xi. xii.

|| Acts xi.

the foundation of such lofty pretensions in his supposed successors to the primacy, how would they have gloried, if his labours at Rome had been so distinctly celebrated, as those of St. Paul in several Churches? What bounds would have been set to the pride of ecclesiastical Rome, could she have boasted of herself as the mother-church, like Jerusalem, or even exhibited such trophies of Scriptural fame, as Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, or Ephesus? The silence of Scripture is the more remarkable, because the Church itself was in an early period by no means insignificant, either for the number or the piety of its converts. Their faith was spoken of through the whole world.* The Apostle thus commends them; nor does he in his epistle to them intimate any thing peculiarly faulty in their principles or conduct. The epistle to the Romans itself, while the world endures, will be the food of Christian minds, and the richest system of doctrine to scriptural theologians. By the distinct directions which he gives for the maintenance of charity between Jews and Gentiles, it appears that there must have been a considerable number of the former among them. If one might indulge a conjecture, I should suppose that Aquila and Priscilla, who had laboured with St. Paul at Corinth, both in a spiritual and temporal sense, and had been expelled from Italy by the emperor Claudius, and whom he here salutes as at Rome, were first concerned in the plantation of this Church, which was numerous, before any Apostle had been there. Andronicus and Junias are saluted also in the epistle: they were men of character among the Apostles, whose conversion was of an earlier date than St. Paul's: they were also his kinsmen, and had suffered in conjunction with him for the faith. He salutes also a number of others, though they might not all be residents of Rome. The work of Divine Grace in distinguishing persons of various families and connections is ever observable. There were saints at Rome of the two families of Aristobulus and Narcissus. The former was of the royal blood of the Maccabees, and had been carried prisoner to Rome by Pompey. He himself had suffered a variety of hardships incident to a life of turbulent ambition like his; yet some of his family, of no note in civil history, are

marked as the disciples of Christ, and heirs of the true riches. Narcissus is distinguished in Roman history, as the ambitious prime minister of Claudius; yet some of his household were in the Lord.

Paul had long wished and even projected a visit to this Church. He did not expect that his journey thither at last was to be at Caesar's expense. Confident however he was, that when he did come to them, it should be "in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ." And he intreats the prayers of the Romans, that he may be delivered from the infidel Jews, and be acceptable in his ministry to his believing countrymen at Jerusalem, whither he was then hastening, that "he might come to them with joy by the will of God," and be with them refreshed. Thus did Christians in those days intreat the prayers of their brethren through the world, and sympathize with one another. And the prayers were answered: Paul was saved from Jewish malice: was acceptable to the Jewish converts, "who had compassion on him in his bonds;" and was conducted safe to Rome. At Appii Forum and the three taverns he was met by the Roman Christians: he thanked God and took courage,† refreshed, as he had been confident he should be, whenever he might arrive among them. None but those, who know what is meant by the communion of saints, can conceive the pleasure which he felt on the occasion. After a charitable but fruitless attempt to do good to the principal Jews at Rome, he employed the two years of his imprisonment in receiving all who came to him, preaching with all confidence, and without molestation. On account of his imprisonment and examination at Rome, the nature of the Gospel began to be inquired into in Nero's court, and the conclusion of the epistle to the Philippians makes it evident, that some of the imperial household became Christians indeed. And as the court was by no means disposed to treat him with rigour, but rather to favour him with indulgences as a Roman citizen, hence many preachers in Rome and the neighbourhood exerted themselves with more courage than formerly they dared to do. Yet certain persons even then could preach Christ with malevolent views of depreciating the Apostles: others did it with sincere charity. But as real bene-

* Rom. i.

• Acts xxviii. 15.

† Philippians i.

fit accrued to the souls of men from the labours of the former as well as of the latter, the heart of Paul, with a charity, the wonderful effect of heavenly teaching, could rejoice in both.

Some writers seem to have gone too far, in denying that Peter ever was at Rome. But the cause of Protestantism needs not the support of an unreasonable scepticism. Undoubtedly the account of Peter's martyrdom there, with that of Paul, rests on a foundation sufficiently strong, namely, the concurrent voice of antiquity. His first epistle, by an expression at the close of it,* appears to have been dated thence; for the Church at Babylon, according to the style of Christians at that time, could be no other than the Church at Rome.—Of the literal Babylon we find nothing in the writings of those days.

CHAPTER XIII.

COLOSSE.

This city of Phrygia was in the neighbourhood of Laodicea and Hierapolis, and all three seem to have been converted by the ministry of Epaphras the Colossian, a companion and fellow-labourer of Paul, who attended him at Rome during his imprisonment, and informed him of the sincerity and fruitfulness of their Christian profession. For though he speaks to the Colossians only, yet the religious state of the two neighbouring cities may be conceived to be much the same. The example of Epaphras deserves to be pointed out to the imitation of all ministers. He always laboured fervently for them in prayers, "that they might stand perfect and complete in all the will of God."† And this was indeed one of the best methods of evincing the sincerity of his zeal, which Paul owns to have been great for those Churches.

The Apostle himself, in the fulness and fervency of his charity, wishes, that the Colossians knew how strong the conflict of his soul was for them, that they might feel the comfort, understand the mystery, and enjoy the riches of the Gospel.‡ They had never seen his face in the flesh; but he felt for them as Christian brethren, and honoured them as those, in whom the word brought forth fruit, and who had

a lively hope in Christ beyond the grave. But there must have been some particular dangers incident to their situation, to give propriety to the cautions in his epistle against philosophy and vain deceit, against Judaical dependencies and rites, and against an illegitimate humility and self-righteous austerities. Such things, he observes, carry indeed the appearance of wisdom and goodness,* but lead only to pride and an extravagant self estimation. And the tendency of them is, to draw the mind from that simplicity of dependence on Christ, which is the true rest of the soul, and the right frame of a Christian.

In truth, the Jew by his ceremonies, and the Gentile by his philosophy, equally laboured to overturn the Gospel of Christ. And their self-righteous efforts are then only effectually opposed, when Christians know their "completeness in Christ, and walk in him." After delivering a number of beautiful precepts closely interwoven with Christian doctrine, the Apostle directs them to read his epistle in their assembly, and then to send it to be read by the Laodiceans; and also to receive an epistle from Laodicea to be read in their own Church, which, most probably, was the epistle to the Ephesians; none of these places being at a great distance from one another.† And he gives a plain, but very serious charge, to Archippus their present pastor. We see hence with what care these precious apostolical remains were preserved among primitive Christians; and we may conceive, how, in the infancy of spiritual consolation, they fed on those lively oracles, which we now so indolently possess.

I see nothing more to be collected from the Scriptures concerning the state of this Church, except the instructive anecdote in the epistle to Philemon. This man, a Colossian Christian, had a slave, named Onesimus, who deserted from his master, probably not without some depredations of his property, and wandered to Rome. That, like all great cities, was the sink, which received the confluence of various vices and crimes. There the wonderful Grace of God seized his heart. Providence brought him to hear Paul preach, which we have seen that Apostle continue to do for two years in his imprisonment. Though former means of instruction under his Christian master had failed,

* 1 Pet. v. 13.
† Chap. ii. 1, 2.

‡ Col. iv. 12.

* Col. ii. ult.

† Chap. iv. 16, 17.

now, at length, his eyes were opened, and he became a Christian indeed. Paul would have found him a useful assistant at Rome, but thought it most proper to send him back to his master at Colosse; and this he did with a short letter, which may justly be considered as a masterpiece of Christian politeness, address, and sincerity. In his Colossian epistle he mentions him also as a faithful and beloved brother.—What important changes Divine Grace can effect in the hearts of men, even of slaves, whom proud philosophers despised, appears very evident from this instance!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA.

THERE are some countries, to which we understand that the Gospel was carried during the first effusion of the Holy Spirit, which are only incidentally mentioned without any detail of facts.

Extensive as we have seen, from St. Luke's narrative, the labours of the Apostle Paul were, it is evident from the epistles, that he is far from relating the whole of them. We cannot learn, for instance, from the acts, when he visited Crete. Yet the short epistle to Titus, whom he left there with episcopal authority, to ordain ministers in every city, and to regulate the churches, shows that that island of a hundred cities had been considerably evangelized; and that many persons, among a people proverbially deceitful, ferocious, and intemperate, had received the wholesome yoke of Christ.

And though I cannot but think, that the strangers scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, to whom St. Peter addresses his two epistles, must mean the Jews of those countries, yet their conversion would doubtless be attended with that of many Gentiles. Of three of these we know nothing particularly: the work of God in Galatia has been reviewed; and Asia propria alone, of all the evangelized regions mentioned in scripture history, so far as I can discover, remains now to be considered.

It was on his first departure from Corinth, that Paul first visited Ephesus,* which name stands at the head of the seven Churches of Asia, to whom St. John dedicates the book of the Revelation. The

impression made on his hearers during this visit, must have been remarkably great, as it was but a short one, and as they pressed his longer continuance among them. He left them however for their comfort and instruction Aquila and Priscilla, whose labours were afterwards assisted by Apollos.

Paul himself returning to Ephesus, baptized in the name of Jesus about twelve disciples, who had hitherto received only John's baptism.* From this circumstance we learn, that from the first preaching of the Baptist nothing had been done in vain. The imperfect elements of that harbinger of Christ had paved the way for clearer discoveries, and a variety of preparatory works had tended to ripen the Church of God into the fulness of light and holiness.

Paul preached three months in the Jewish synagogue at Ephesus, till the usual perverseness of the Jews induced him to desist, and to form the converts into a distinct Church. One Tyrannus lent his school for the service of Christianity; and in that convenient place, for the space of two years, the Apostle daily ministered, instructed, and disputed. And thus the whole region of Asia propria had at different times an opportunity of hearing the Gospel.

In no place does the word of God seem so much to have triumphed as at Ephesus. No less numerous than those of Corinth, the believers were much more spiritual. The work of conversion was deep, vigorous, and soul-transforming to a great degree. Many persons, struck with the horror of their former crimes, made an open confession; and many, who had dealt in the abominations of sorcery, now showed their sincere detestation of them by burning their books before all men, the price of which amounted to a large sum. "So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed."—Thus triumphs the sacred historian.—Satan must have trembled for his kingdom: the emptiness of all the systems of philosophy appeared no less palpable, than the flagitiousness of vice, and the enormities of idolatry: The spiritual power of Jesus was never seen in a stronger light since the day of Pentecost; and the venal priesthood of Diana the celebrated goddess of Ephesus, apprehended the total ruin of their hierarchy.

* Acts xviii. 19.

* Acts xix.

No place on earth was more devoted to idolatry. A number of ingenious artists were employed by making silver shrines for Diana. They felt a sensible diminution of their numbers, and found themselves bound by interest to support the credit of the goddess. Most people through almost all Asia had been induced to believe, that manufactured gods were mere nothing; and it seemed high time to make some strong efforts in favour of the declining superstition. They soon prevailed so far as to fill the city with tumult; and they hurried two of Paul's companions with them into the theatre, where the whole mob assembled. The daring spirit of Paul would have led him into the same place. His Christian friends interposed, and even some of the Asiarchs,—persons who presided over the games,—who had a personal esteem for him, kindly dissuaded him. His zeal seems not void of rashness, but it was the rashness of a hero vexed to the soul to think that Gaius and Aristarchus, his two friends, were likely to suffer in his absence. Now I apprehend was that season of extreme distress, which he felt in Asia, and which he describes so pathetically* in his epistle to the Corinthians. Human resources failed; and God alone, he learnt, could support him. The prudent and eloquent language of a magistrate, called the town clerk, was the providential instrument of his deliverance. He calmed the spirit of the Ephesians, and allayed the uproar; after which Paul affectionately exhorted the disciples, and left Ephesus. Three years he had laboured with great success; and he had the precaution to leave pastors to superintend that and the neighbouring Churches. But he foresaw with grief, as he afterwards told these pastors in a very pathetic address, when he had sent for them to Miletus,† that their present purity would not continue unattained. Wolves would enter among them to devour the flock; and, among themselves heretical perverseness would find countenance, and produce pernicious separations. He did all, however, which man could do; he warned them of the danger; and exhorted them to the persevering discharge of their duty.

The parting between the Apostles and these ministers cannot be read without emotion. The elegant and affecting nar-

rative of St. Luke is before the reader, and ought not to be abridged. The corruption of this excellent Church, seems not, however, to have taken place, when he wrote to them his epistle. It is full of instruction; and next to that to the Romans, may be looked on as a most admirable system of divinity. It has this remarkable recommendation, that it will serve for any Church and for any age. Not a vestige appears in it of any thing peculiarly miraculous, or exclusively primitive. The controversies of the Christian world concerning doctrine would soon be decided, if men would submit to be taught by the simple, literal, and grammatical meaning of this short treatise. Every thing of doctrine and of duty is in it: and what the Gospel really is, may thence be collected with the greatest certainty.

It appears that Timothy was the chief pastor at Ephesus in Paul's absence.* The Apostle's first epistle to him throws some light on the state of this Church during his administration. There were some persons of a Jaddical and legal turn of mind, who endeavoured, by contentious questions, to pervert the simplicity of evangelical faith, hope, and love. There were others in the opposite extreme: Two are particularly characterized, Hymeneus and Alexander, who abused the profession of the faith to such open licentiousness, as to render their ejection from the Church a necessary measure. So early were the Churches of Christ infected with the same evils, which at this day fall not to attend the propagation of Divine truth! From the directions which he gives to Timothy concerning the regulation of public worship, and the character and conduct of church officers, it appears, indeed, that ecclesiastical polity had taken a firm root in this Church. But modern pretensions and bigots will still search the Scriptures in vain to find their own exact model, in matters which the word of God hath left indifferent, or at least to be decided only by various circumstances of prudential expediency: Churches will, doubtless, be much better employed, in establishing and in observing useful practical rules, which are compatible with very different forms of government. I should suspect, that the superstitious and self-righteous spirit, which, under a thousand austerities afterwards supported itself in the

* 2 Cor. i. 3, 9, 10.

† Acts xx.

* 1 Timothy i.

eastern Churches, and proved one of the most powerful engines of popery, had even then begun to show itself in Ephesus, and had given occasion to the apostolical cautions, as well as to the prophetic declaration of the vast increase of those evils in after times.* It was the charitable practice of the Church of Ephesus, to maintain Christian widows at the public expense. But I fear this liberality had been abused. Young widows, who had been living a life of ease, had thrown themselves as a burden on their religious brethren; and however high they might appear in Christian profession, some of them exchanged the love of Christ for the love of the world, and the indulgence of sensuality.† As an idle life is a great source of these evils, the Apostle recommends that these should be encouraged to enter again into the matrimonial state, which would furnish laudable domestic employments, rather than that they should be maintained by the Church, in a state of indolence. The widows, who should be so maintained by the public stock, he recommends to be those, who were far advanced in life, of eminent laborious piety, and distinguished for their works of charity.

On the whole, we may discover among these excellent people some appearances of the very worst of evils; which, as yet, made feeble efforts, were kept down by the superior light and grace that prevailed, and which seemed in indignant silence to be expecting future opportunities of diffusing themselves.

We know nothing more of this Church during the remainder of St. Paul's life, nor after his death, till towards the close of the first century. St. John, the only survivor of the Apostles, long continued his fatherly care of the Churches of Asia propria. During his exile at Patmos he was favoured with an astonishing and magnificent vision of the Lord Jesus,‡ from whom he received several distinct charges, addressed to the seven Churches of Asia, descriptive of their spiritual state at that time, and containing suitable directions to each of them. The pastors of the Churches are called angels; and what has been observable in all ages was then the case,—the character of the pastors was much the same with that of the people. We have here then, from the highest authority, some account of the state of these Churches at the close of the first

century.—It is short, but important.—Let us endeavour to comprise it into as clear a view as possible.

The Ephesians were still alive in the faith.* Attempts had been made to pervert them, but in vain. However subtle the poison of heresy be, here it could find no admission. Nor could the abominations of the Nicolaitanes, who appear to have been a sect extremely corrupt in morals, make any progress among them. They patiently bore the cross ever attendant on the real faith of Jesus, but could endure nothing that tended to adulterate it. The taste and spirit of the Gospel continued with them: they laboured in good works without fainting or weariness; and their spiritual discernment was not to be imposed on by any pretences. Yet they had declined from the intenseness of that love which they had at first exhibited: Their hearts panted not after Christ with that steady ardour which formerly had animated this people; and, with all the marks of sound health remaining, their vigour had much abated.

How exactly does this account agree with the common case of the best Christian Churches. Because it is a common case, and far from being the worst case, Christians are apt to be content under such a decline, and to impute it to necessity, or to the loss of sudden fervours of no great value, and to plume themselves on the solidity of an improved judgment. But true zeal and true charity should be shown habitually, and not only now and then when occasional inroads of the enemy may happen to call for particular exertions. These affections ought to grow as the understanding is improved. The spirit of prayer, of love to Christ, of active services for his name, was now abated at Ephesus, and a cool prudence was too much magnified at the expense of charity. The eternal salvation of real Christians there was safe; but real Christians should have more in view than their own salvation,—namely, the propagation of godliness to posterity. These cautious Christians did not consider that their decline paved the way for farther and more melancholy declensions in the divine life: that the influence of their example was likely to be mischievous to those who followed; that their juniors would much

Character
of the
Church of
Ephesus.

* 1 Tim. iv.

† v. 15.

‡ Rev. i.

• Rev. ii.

more readily imitate their defects than their virtues; in fine, that a foundation was already laid for the unchurching of this people, and for the desolation in which this very region now remains under Mahometan wickedness and ignorance.

The Church of Smyrna is next addressed. They were at once in a state of great purity of doctrine, and holiness of heart and life. The divine Saviour commends them in general. That toward the end of the first century, they should have

preserved the divine life in such vigour,—a period of about forty years most probably, if indeed there had been no intermissions,—is somewhat extraordinary, and except in the case of Philadelphia, not easily paralleled in history:—So naturally does depravity prevail, in a course of time, over the best constituted churches. But their tribulation and poverty are particularly marked. They were rich in heavenly grace, poor in worldly circumstances. If poor Churches were fully sensible of the mischiefs which often arise from the accession of opulent individuals, they would not plume themselves so much on the admission of such members as they often do. The Smyranean Christians were chiefly of the poorer sort of inhabitants; yet were they infested with pretenders, of the same spirit as those, who attempted to adulterate the Gospel at Ephesus. Of the Smyrneans it may be sufficient to say, that they made large pretensions to pure religion; that their corruptions were Judaical; and that they were under the influence of Satan. This Church is taught to expect a severe persecution which was to last some time; and they are exhorted to persevere in faith.

The Church of Pergamus was also approved of in general. They lived in the midst of a very impious people, who, in effect, worshipped Satan himself, and did all that in them lay to support his kingdom.

Yet was their zeal firm and steady. Nor was its object a few trifling punctilios, or some little niceties of a doubtful disputation, but the precious name of Christ himself, and the faith of his Gospel. Hence they were exposed not only to contempt, but to danger of life itself, and to cruel sufferings. Our Lord mentions one person with particular complacency, “my faithful mar-

tyr Antipas.” We know no more of him than what is here recorded,—that “he was slain among them where Satan dwelt.” But what an honour to be thus distinguished! Volumes of panegyric have been composed for mere statesmen, heroes, and scholars. How frigid do they all appear taken together, compared with this simple testimony of Jesus! But this Church does not escape censure entirely. There were among them certain wicked and dangerous characters, who, acting like Balaam of old, were employed by Satan to entice persons to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication;—two evils often closely connected: Even the abominations of the Nicolaitanes were practised by some. All these are exhorted to repent, from the fear of divine vengeance. On the whole, with a few exceptions, and those indeed of an extraordinary degree of malignity, the Church of Pergamus was pure and lively, and upheld the standard of truth, though encircled with the flames of martyrdom.

The Church of Thyatira was in a thriving state. Charity, active services, patient dependence on God, and a steady reliance on the divine promises, marked their works: and, what is peculiarly laudable, their last works were more excellent than their first.* A sounder proof of genuine religion than such a gradual improvement can scarcely be conceived. Yet it is imputed as a fault to this Church, that they suffered an artful woman to seduce the people into the same evils, which had infected Pergamus. Her real name we know not: her allegorical name is Jezebel: she resembled the wife of Ahab, who kept four hundred prophets at her table, and exerted all her influence to promote idolatry. The people of God should have counteracted her, but they did not; an advantage which deceitful guides have often gained through the negligence of the sincere. The very sex of the pretended prophetess was a sufficient reason why she should have been restrained. “Let your women keep silence in the Churches,”† is an express prohibition of females from the office of teaching, however useful in other respects pious women may be in the Church. Our Lord informs the Church in Thyatira, that he gave her space to repent, but to no purpose, and therefore now denounces

The Church of Thyatira.

The Church of Pergamus.

severe threatenings against her and her associates, at the same time vindicating his claim to divine worship by the incommunicable title of him who searches the hearts, and declaring that he would make himself known to be such in all the Churches. To those who had kept themselves unspotted from these evils, he declares "he would put no other burden on them:" only he exhorts them to hold fast what they already had to the day of judgment. The unsound Christians in this place pretended to great depths of knowledge, which were, in reality, depths of Satan. Such persons often impose on others, and are imposed on themselves, by pretences to profound knowledge and to superior degrees of sanctity.

The Church of Sardis presents us with an unpleasing spectacle. Their great inferiority to Thyatira evinces,

The
Church of
Sardis.

how possible it is for two societies of Christians holding the same doctrines, to be in a very different state. He who "walks in the midst of the Churches," extols the growing faith and charity of the first, and condemns the drooping condition of the second. They had neglected that course of prayer and watchfulness, which is necessary to preserve the divine life in vigour. Their works were now faintly distinguishable from those of persons altogether dead in sin. Some good things remained in them, which yet were ready to die: but their lives brought no glory to God, nor benefit to the cause of Christ; and could scarcely prevent its being scandalized in the world. A few names indeed there were in Sardis, whom Jesus looked on with complacency: they had not defiled their garments. But most of the Christians there had contracted deep stains, probably by freely mixing with the world, and by conforming to its customs. And we see here an awful fact authenticated in the highest possible manner,—that among a society of persons all professing the Gospel, the greater part may be very dead in their souls. It should ever be remembered, that human nature is averse to real faith, heavenly hope, and genuine charity. An omnipotent energy alone can produce or preserve true holiness. This had been the case at Sardis, when the Church partook of the first effusion of the Spirit. Quite contrary to the usual course of natural things, which

are brought to perfection by slow and gradual improvements, in Christ's religion godliness starts up in the infancy of things in its best form. Seldom are the last works, as was the case at Thyatira, more abundant or more excellent. Heresies, refinements, human cautions, commonly adulterate the work of God. An abuse, perhaps, of some frantic enthusiast appears: the correction of it by some presumptuous pretender to reason introduces another more specious, but more durable one. The love of the world increases with the abatement of persecution. The natural propensity of man to sin exerts itself more and more: lively Christians are removed by death: their juniors inferior in all solid godliness, superior only in self-estimation, reduce the standard of Christian grace lower and lower: apologies are invented for sin; what was once experimentally known, becomes matter of barren speculation: Even Scriptural terms expressive of vital religion are despised or sparingly used: fainter and more polite modes of speech, better adapted to classical neatness, but proper to hide and disguise the ambiguities of scepticism, are introduced: the pride of reasoning grows strong: and men choose rather to run the risk of hell itself, than to be thoroughly humbled. The strong hand of God alone, in overbearing convictions and terrors, and in the sweetest, but most powerful attractions of grace, can conquer this contemptuous spirit. No wonder then, that those who never felt, or who have quenched in a great measure these terrors and these attractions, relapse into an impatient fastidiousness. And then the influence of the Holy Spirit itself is reasoned against with petty cavils, and aspersed by illiberal suspicions. Unfaithful and unexperienced persons, who undertake to teach in these circumstances, will often, in attempting to discriminate the operations of the Spirit of God from delusions, be unfeeling, rough, and unskilful. To them weeds and flowers in the garden of Paradise will be the same thing. A malignant instinct of profane propensity tempts them to pull up altogether, till they leave only the love of the world, and, what they proudly call, common sense; which last expression will be found, at bottom, to denote a very mischievous engine in religious matters; for, so applied, it means neither more nor less

The
causes of
the de-
clension
of the
Church of
Sardis.

than simply, the natural, unassisted powers of the human mind, darkened and corrupted, as they are, by the fall. And now, by frequent disuse, prayer and religious exercises, grow disagreeable: Sensual and worldly objects allure the carnal mind with success: Lucrative speculations in commerce devour the spirit of godly meditation: The seasons of religious duty are jostled out by the throng of business; and excuses of necessity are easily admitted: Men find a pleasure in being no longer reputed fanatics; and professors of Christianity will now ask leave of the world, how far it will permit them to proceed in religion without offence.

I dare not say, that all this exactly took place at Sardis; but much of it did, no doubt; and on occasion of this first instance of a general declension, it seemed not unreasonable to point out its ordinary progress and symptoms.

The Christians of Philadelphia are highly extolled. They were an humble, charitable, fervent people, deeply sensible of their own weakness,

The Church of Philadel-
phia. fearful of being seduced by Satan and their own hearts.

The Spirit assures them, that they had a little strength, which had at once been proved and exerted in holding fast the simplicity of the Gospel, and in detecting and resisting all adulterations of it. They are further assured, that the Judaical heresies should be brought at length to submit to become their disciples in religion: And a promise of strong support is held out to them, because they had maintained a true patience in suffering. To them, as to all the rest of the Churches, the rewards beyond the grave are proposed as the grand motives of perseverance.

Laodicea too much resembled Sardis. The people were in a lukewarm state, a religious mediocrity, most odious to

The Church of Laodicea. Christ; because his religion calls for the whole vehemence of the soul, and bids us to be cool only in worldly things.

The foundation of this lukewarmness was laid in pride: They had lost the conviction of their internal blindness, misery, and depravity. When men go on for years in a placid unfeeling uniformity, this is always the case. They were satisfied with themselves, and felt no need of higher attainments. The counsel, which is given to them,—to buy of him gold, white raiment, and eye-salve,—is pro-

icious; and this call to their souls demonstrates that they had learnt to maintain, in easy indolence, an orthodoxy of sentiments without any vivid attention to the Spirit of God:—In a word, his influence was only not despised in Laodicea.

Such were the situations of the seven Churches of Asia. The criticism is indeed inestimable: It is candid, impartial, and penetrating. He, who has indulged us with it, intended it for the use of all succeeding Churches:—and “he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the Churches.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE REMAINDER OF THE FIRST CENTURY.

It is the observation of one of the ancients, that St. Luke, in the close of his Apostolical history, leaves the reader thirsting for more. I feel the force and justness of the thought at this moment. I have hitherto sailed by the compass of Scripture; and now find myself at once entering into an immense ocean without a guide. In fact I have undertaken to conduct the reader through a long, obscure, and difficult course, with scarcely a beacon here and there set up to direct me:—but I must make the best use I can of the very scanty materials before me.

It seems plain, that the Apostles in general did not leave Judea, till after the first council held at Jerusalem. They seem never to have been in haste to quit the land of their nativity. Probably the threatening appearances of its desolation by the Romans, hastened their departure into distant regions. It is certain that before the close of this century, the power of the Gospel was felt throughout the Roman empire.—I shall divide this chapter into four parts, and review, first,—The progress and persecution of the Church. Secondly,—The lives, characters, and deaths of the Apostles and most celebrated Evangelists. Thirdly,—The heresies of this period. And, lastly,—The general character of Christianity in this first age.

It was about the year of our Lord 64, that the city of Rome sustained a general conflagration. Burning of Rome: The emperor Nero, lost as he was to all sense of reputation,

A. D. 64.

and hackneyed in flagitiousness, was yet studious to avert the infamy of being

reckoned the author of this calamity, which was generally imputed to him. But no steps that he could take were sufficient to do away the suspicion. There was, however, a particular class of people, so singularly distinct from the rest of mankind, and so much hated on account of the condemnation which their doctrine and purity of life affixed to all except themselves, that they might be calumniated with impunity. These were then known at Rome by the name of Christians. Unless we transplant ourselves into those times, we can scarcely conceive how odious and contemptible the appellation then was. The judicious Tacitus calls their religion a detestable superstition,* "which at first was suppressed, and afterwards broke out afresh, and spread not only through Judea the origin of the evil, but through the metropolis also, the common sewer in which every thing filthy and flagitious meets and spreads." If so grave and cautious a writer as Tacitus can thus asperse the Christians without proof, and without moderation, we need not wonder that so impure a wretch as Nero should not hesitate to charge them with the fact of burning Rome.

Now it was that the Romans legally persecuted the Church for the first time.

First persecution of the Christians by the Romans:

A. D. 64.

And those, who know the virulence of man's natural enmity, will rather wonder that it commenced not earlier, than that it raged at length with such dreadful fury. "Some persons were apprehended, who confessed themselves Christians; and by their evidence, says Tacitus, a great multitude afterwards were discovered and seized:—and they were condemned not so much for the burning of Rome as for being the enemies of mankind." A very remarkable accusation! It may be explained as follows:—True Christians, though the genuine friends of all their fellow-creatures, cannot allow men, who are not true Christians, to be in the favour of God. Their very earnestness, in calling on their neighbours to repent and believe the Gospel, proves to those neighbours in what a dangerous state they are then apprehended to be. All, who are not moved by the admonitions of Christian charity to flee from the wrath to come, will naturally be disgusted; and thus the purest benevolence will

be construed into the most merciless bigotry. Thus Christians incurred the general hatred, to which the conduct neither of Jews nor heretics rendered them obnoxious.—And the same cause produces similar effects to this day.

Their execution was aggravated with insult. They were covered with skins of wild beasts and torn by dogs: they were crucified, and set on fire, that they might serve for lights in the night-time. Nero offered his gardens for this spectacle, and exhibited the games of the circus. People could not, however, avoid pitying them, base and undeserving as they were in the eyes of Tacitus, because they suffered not for the public good, but to gratify the cruelty of a tyrant. It appears from a passage in Seneca,* compared with Juvenal, that Nero ordered them to be covered with wax, and other combustible materials: and that, after a sharp stake was put under their chin, to make them continue upright, they were burnt alive to give light to the spectators.†

We have no account how the people of God conducted themselves under these sufferings. What we know of their behaviour in similar scenes, leave us in no doubt of their having been supported by the power of the Holy Ghost. Nor is it credible, that the persecution should have been confined to Rome. It would naturally spread through the empire; and one of Cyriac's inscriptions found in Spain,‡ demonstrates at once two important facts,—that the Gospel had already penetrated into that country, and—that the Church there also had her martyrs.

Three or four years were probably the utmost extent of this tremendous persecution, as in the year 68 the tyrant was himself, by a dreadful exit, summoned before the divine A. D. 68. tribunal. He left the Roman world in a state of extreme confusion.—Judea partook of it in a remarkable degree. About forty years after our Lord's sufferings, wrath came on the body of the Jewish nation to the uttermost, in a manner too well known to need the least relation in this history. What became of the Christian Jews alone concerns us.—The congregation were commanded, by an

* Seneca, Ep. 14, Juv. 1 and 8, with his Scholiast.

† Bullet's History of Established Christianity.

‡ See Gibbon's Account of Christianity considered, p. 93.

* Tacitus, B. xv.

oracle revealed to the best approved among them, that before the wars began, they should depart from the city, and inhabit a village beyond Jordan, called Pella.*— Thither they retired, and were saved from the destruction, which soon after overwhelmed their countrymen: and in so returning they at once observed the precept, and fulfilled the well-known prophecy of their Saviour. The death of Nero, and the destruction of Jerusalem, would naturally occasion some respite to them from their sufferings; and we hear no more of

their persecuted state, till the reign of Domitian, the last of the Flavian family, who succeeded to the empire in the year 81.

He does not appear to have raged against the Christians, till the latter end of his reign. Indeed, in imitation of his father Vespasian, he made inquiry for such of the Jews as were descended from the royal line of David. His motives were evidently political. But there wanted not those who were glad of any opportunity of working their malice on Christians. Some persons, who were brought before the emperor, were charged with being related to the royal family.— They appear to have been related to our Lord, and were grandsons of Jude the Apostle, his cousin. Domitian asked them, if they were of the family of David, which they acknowledged. He then demanded, what possessions they enjoyed, and what money they had. They laid open the poverty of their circumstances, and owned that they maintained themselves by their labour. The truth of their confession was evinced by their hands, and by their appearance in general. Domitian then interrogated them concerning Christ and his kingdom.—when and where it should appear? They answered, like their master when questioned by Pilate,—that his kingdom was not of this world, but heavenly; that its glory should appear at the consummation of the world, when he should judge the quick and dead, and reward every man according to his works. Poverty is sometimes a defence against oppression, though it never shields from contempt. Domitian was satisfied, that his throne was in no danger from Christian ambition: and the grandsons of Jude were dismissed with the same sort of derision with which their Saviour had formerly been dismissed by Herod. These

had the Son of God provided for his indigent relations:—they were poor in circumstances, but rich in faith, and heirs of his heavenly kingdom.

As Domitian increased in cruelty, toward the end of his reign he renewed the horrors of Nero's persecution. He^e put to death many persons accused of atheism, the common charge against Christians, on account of their refusal to worship the pagan gods.

Domitian's persecution:
A. D. 95.

Among these was the consul Flavius Clemens his cousin, who had espoused Flavia Domitilla his relation. Suetonius observes, that this man was quite despicable on account of his slothfulness. Many others were condemned likewise, who had embraced Jewish customs, says Dion; part of them were put to death, others spoiled of their goods, and Domitilla herself was banished into the island of Pandataria. Eusebius records the same facts with some little variation: but, as he professes to borrow from the pagan writers in this instance, I shall be content with their account.

It is not hard to conceive the real characters of those two noble persons. It ought not to be doubted that they were genuine Christians, whom God had distinguished by his grace, and enabled to live upon it, and to suffer for it. The blood of the Caesars, and the splendour of the imperial house, rendered them only more conspicuous objects of disgust. It is well known that no positive crime is ascribed to either of them. The charge of intolerance against the husband is natural enough, and does honour to the heavenly-mindedness of the man, whose spirit could not mix with the evils of secular ambition, and with the vices of the imperial court. The humanity of the times in which we live, and the blessings of the civil freedom which the subjects of these kingdoms enjoy, protect us, it is true, from similar dangers of life or property; nevertheless, who has not observed, that even rank and dignity are among us exposed to considerable contempt, whenever a man is conspicuous and eminent for a zealous profession and diligent practice of truly Evangelical doctrines and precepts?

In the year 96 Domitian was slain: and Nerva the succeeding emperor,† published

* Euseb., B. iii. c. 3.

^e Euseb., B. iii. 17. Dion Cassius.

† Dion.

A. D. 96. a pardon for those who were condemned for impiety, recalled those who were banished, and forbade the accusing of any men on account of impiety, or Judaism. Others, who were under accusation or under sentence of condemnation, now escaped by the lenity of Nerva. This brings us to the close of the century, in which we behold the Christians for the present, in a state of external peace. Only one person enjoyed not the benefit of Nerva's mildness. Domitilla still continued in exile, probably because she was a relation of the late tyrant, whose name was now odious through the world. Doubtless she was not forsaken of her God and Saviour.

II. The Apostles and Evangelists of this period, were their story distinctly known, and circumstantially related, would afford materials indeed of the rarest pleasure to every Christian mind.—But there never arose in the Church any historians like Thucydides and Livy, to illustrate and celebrate the actions of saints. Heroes and statesmen have their reward here,—saints hereafter. Christ's kingdom must not appear to be of this world; and while large volumes have been filled with the exploits of heroes, and the intrigues of statesmen, the men, who were the divine instruments of evangelizing souls,—the New Testament history excepted,—are for the most part unknown.

The first of the twelve Apostles who suffered martyrdom, we have seen, was James the son of Zebedee; He fell a sacrifice to Herod Agrippa's ambitious desire of popularity. I recal him to the reader's memory on account of a remarkable circumstance attending his death.* The man, who had drawn him before the tribunal, when he saw the readiness with which he submitted to martyrdom, was struck with remorse; and, by one of those sudden conversions not infrequent amidst the remarkable effusions of the Spirit, was himself turned from the power of Satan to God. He confessed Christ with great cheerfulness. James and this man were both led to execution; and in the way thither the accuser requested the Apostle's forgiveness, which he obtained. James turning to him answered, "Peace be to thee;" and kissed him; and they were beheaded together. The efficacy of

Divine Grace, and the blessed fruit of holy example, are both illustrated in this story, of which it were to be wished we knew more than the very scanty account which has been delivered.

The other James was preserved in Judea to a much later period. His martyrdom took place about the year 62; and his epistle was published a little before his death. As he always resided at Jerusalem, and was providentially preserved through various persecutions, he had an opportunity of overcoming enmity itself, and abating prejudice, in some measure. The name of Just was generally given him on account of his singular innocence and integrity. And as he conformed to Jewish customs with more than occasional regularity, he was by no means so odious in the eyes of his unbelieving countrymen, as the Apostle of the Gentiles. But we are to observe, that if he had fully overcome their enmity, he could not have been faithful to his Lord and Master.

Many Jews respected the man, and admired the fruits of the Gospel in him. The root and principle of these fruits was still their abhorrence; and from the relation of Eusebius, the testimony of Hegesippus, an early Christian historian whom he quotes, and of Josephus, it is plain, that it was thought a pitiable thing, that so good a man should be a Christian. Paul's escape from Jewish malice, by appealing to Cæsar, had sharpened the spirits of this people; and they were determined to wreak their vengeance on James, who was merely a Jew, and could plead no Roman exemptions. Festus died president of Judea; and, before his successor Albinus arrived, Ananias the high-priest, a Sadducee and a merciless persecutor, held the supreme power in the interim. He called a council, before which he summoned James with some others, and accused them of breaking the law of Moses. But it was not easy to procure his condemnation. His holy life had long secured the veneration of his countrymen.*

The leading men were uneasy on account of the vast increase of Christian

* I have compared Josephus's account with that of Hegesippus, which last appears compatible enough with the former, and no way improbable; though I think he gives his character more of the ascetic, than I believe to be consistent with that of a Christian Apostle.

* Euseb. i. 9.

Martyrdom of James the Just :
A. D. 62.

converts, added to the Church by his labours, example, and authority: and they endeavoured to entangle him, by persuading him to mount a pinnacle of the temple, and to speak to the people assembled at the time of the passover, against Christianity. James being placed aloft, delivered a frank confession of Jesus; and declared that he was then sitting at the right hand of power, and that he would come in the clouds of heaven. Upon this Ananias and the rulers were highly incensed. To disgrace his character was their first intention—they failed. To murder his person was their next attempt; and this was of much more easy execution. Crying out that Jesus himself was seduced, they threw the Apostle down, and stoned him. He had strength to fall on his knees, and to pray, "I beseech thee, Lord God and Father, for them; for they know not what they do." One of the priests moved with the scene, cried out, "Cease, what do you mean? This just man is praying for you." A person present with a fuller's club beat out his brains, and completed his martyrdom.

Very remarkable is the acknowledgment of Josephus. "These things"—meaning the miseries of the Jews from

the Romans—"happened to them by way of revenging the death of James the just, the brother of Jesus whom they call Christ. For the Jews slew him, though a very just man."* And

* I see no good reason to doubt the authenticity of this passage, which gives abundant confirmation to his famous testimony of Christ; which is as follows: "About this time lived Jesus a wise man, if indeed we may call him a man; for he performed marvellous things; he was an instructor of such as embraced the truth with pleasure. He made many converts both among the Jews and Greeks. This was the Christ. And when Pilate, on the accusation of the principal men among us, had condemned him to the cross, those who before entertained a request for him, continued still so to do; for he appeared to them alive again on the third day; the divine prophets having declared of him, and many other wonderful things concerning him. And the sect of Christians so named from him subsists to this very time."

I have examined, as carefully as I can, the doubts which have been started on the authenticity of this passage. To me they seem mere surmises. One of them, the supposed inconsistency of the historian, in testifying so much of Christ, and yet remaining an unconverted Jew, affords an argument in its favour. Inconsistencies ought to be expected from incon-

sistent persons. Such are many in the Christian world at this day, who in like circumstances would have acted a similar part. Such was Josephus. He knew and had studied something of all sorts of opinions in religion; and his writings show him to have been firm in nothing but a regard to his worldly interest. To me he seems to say just so much and no more of Christ, as might be expected from a learned people, of remarkable good sense, and supreme love of worldly things.

After the death of James and desolation of Jerusalem, the Apostles and disciples of our Lord, of whom many were yet alive, gathered themselves together with our Lord's kinsmen, to appoint a pastor of the Church of Jerusalem in the room of James. The election fell on Simeon, the son of that Cleopas, mentioned by St. Luke as one of the two who went to Emmaus, and who was the brother of Joseph our Lord's reputed father. We shall leave Simeon, at the end of this century, the chief pastor of the Jewish church.

Paul the Apostle seems to have laboured with unwearied activity from about the year 36 to the year 63, that is, from his conversion to the period in which St. Luke finishes his history. Within this period he wrote fourteen epistles, which will be the blessed means of feeding the souls of the faithful to the end of time. The second epistle to Timothy has been commonly supposed to have been written just before his martyrdom. I am convinced by Dr. Lardner's reasonings,* that it was more probably written during his two years' imprisonment at Rome, and that he was under no particular apprehension of suffering immediately.† From this epistle it is evident that he had already been called before Nero, agreeably to the prediction, "thou must be brought before Cæsar;" and that no Christian, not even any of those who had welcomed his arrival in Italy, durst appear in support of him;—He feelingly complains, "all men forsook me." Yet he knew how to distinguish between malevolence and timidity; and therefore, though he could not excuse their neglect of him, he prays God that it might not be laid to their charge. The terror of

* See the Supplement to the Credibility.
† This seems evident by his charging Timothy to come to him before winter.

Nero seems to have overawed the Roman Christians, many of whom might have borne witness in his favour. Even Demas forsook him, from the love of the world, and departed to Thessalonica. There are seasons of critical danger, which try the hearts of the truest Christians: It was yet a new thing for a Christian to be brought before an emperor, and they had not prepared themselves by watching and prayer for the uncommon occasion. But the grace of the Lord Jesus which had hitherto been so eminently with the Apostle, forsook him not in his trying moments: 'The Lord "stood with him, and strengthened him:"*' He was enabled to testify for Christ and his Gospel before Nero, with the same frankness, fortitude, and eloquence, that he had formerly done before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa; and for the first time, and probably the last, the murderous tyrant Nero heard the glad tidings of salvation. It seems, by the expression,—"that all the Gentiles might hear,"—that Paul was heard in a very full and solemn assembly, and had an opportunity of giving a clear account of Christianity. And as some of Caesar's household are mentioned as saints in the epistle to the Philippians, there is reason to apprehend, that the preaching was not in vain. He was, as he owns, "delivered from the mouth of the lion." Nero had not then begun to persecute; and at least he would see the justness of his plea as a Roman citizen, and be disposed to favour it. Nor ought the adorable Providence of God to be passed in silence, who gave this man of abandoned wickedness an opportunity of hearing the word of salvation, though it made no useful impression on his mind. Paul seems to have had this audience during the former part of his imprisonment at Rome, and to have been remanded to his confinement for the present.

Here he wrote the epistle to the Philippians and Colossians before the end of the year 62. From the former

of these it appears, that the whole court of Nero was made acquainted with his case, and that the cause of the Gospel was promoted by these means. In the epistle to Philemon, which accompanied that to the Colossians, he expresses a confidence of being soon set at liberty, and promises, in that case, shortly to pay them a visit.† And as he

mentions Demas with respect as his fellow-labourer, both in this epistle to the Colossians, and in that to Philemon, I apprehend Demas had repented of his pusillanimity, and was returned to the Apostle and to his duty. This is the second case in which it pleased God to make use of this extraordinary man, St. Paul, for the preservation of the Church. The former instance respected the doctrine of justification, from which even Apostles were indirectly declining; The latter consisted in the exhibition of a godly spirit of zeal, and an open confession of Christ. Such is the sloth and cowardice of man in divine things, and so little need is there to teach us caution and reserve, that unless God now and then stirred up the spirits of some eminent Christian heroes, to venture through difficulties, and to stand foremost for the truth against opposition, Satan would bear down all before him. Paul was one of the first of these heroes: and we shall see in every age, that God raises up some persons of this hardy temper, whom worldly men never fail contemptuously to denominate fanatics, because they discover that greatness of soul in a heavenly cause, which, in an earthly one, would excite respect and admiration.

Having obtained his liberty in the year 63, he most probably would soon fulfil his promise to visit the Hebrews; after which he might see his Co-

A. D. 63.
lossian friends. There is no certain account of his coming either to Jerusalem or to Colosse; but most probably he executed what he had a little before promised. That he ever visited Spain, or our island, is, to say no more, extremely doubtful. Of the last there is a very unfounded report, and of the former no other proof, than the mention of his intention in the epistle to the Romans, which had been written in the year 58, since which time all his measures had been disconcerted. And if he once more made an Asiatic tour after his departure from Rome, there seems not time enough for his accomplishing the western journey, as he suffered martyrdom on his return to Rome about the year 65*. He could have had no great pleasure at Jeru-

epistles, which he has investigated with singular diligence and sagacity; and I once for all acknowledge my repeated obligations to him in things of this nature.

* Some very respectable Chronologers place the martyrdom of St. Paul, A. D. 67.

* 2 Tim. iv. 17.

† I follow Dr. Lardner in the dates of the

saem: every thing was there hastening to ruin. No man was ever possessed of a more genuine patriotic spirit than this

A. D. 66. Apostle. The Jewish war, which commenced in 66, would have much afflicted him, had he lived to see it. But returning to Rome about a year before, he fell in with the very time when Rome was burnt, and Christians were accused as incendiaries. He now found no mercy in Nero, who would naturally be displeased at the effect, which he had observed the preaching of the Apostle had produced in his own household. A cupbearer and a concubine of the emperor had been, through

Paul's means, converted to the faith, as Chrysostom assures us: and this hastened his death. He was slain with the sword by Nero's order.*

He had many fellow-labourers, whose names he has immortalized in his writings. He calls Titus his own son after the common faith.† Timothy was also a particular favourite. Antiquity regards the former as the first bishop of Crete, and the latter as the first bishop of Ephesus. Luke of Antioch, the writer of the third Gospel, and the faithful relater, in the Acts of the Apostles, of this Apostle's transactions, of which he was an eye-witness, is, by him, affectionately denominated the beloved Physician. He seems to have retired into Greece after St. Paul's first

dismissal by the emperor, and there to have written both his inestimable treatises about the year 63 or 64.

Crocus, whom Paul sent to Galatia, is another of his fellow-labourers. Linus, the first bishop of Rome, may be added to the list, and Dionysius the Areopagite of Athens, whom Eusebius reckons the first bishop of the Church in that city.

We have now finished the lives of two men, of singular excellence unquestionably, James the Just, and Paul of Tarsus. The former by his uncommon virtues, attracted the esteem of a whole people, who were full of the strongest prejudices against him: and in regard to the latter,

the question may be asked with great propriety, whether such another man ever existed among all those, who have inherited the corrupted nature of Adam? He had evidently a soul large and capacious, and

possessed of those seemingly contradictory excellencies which, wherever they appear in combination, fail not to form an extraordinary character. But not only his talents were great and various—his learning also was profound and extensive; and many persons with far inferior abilities and attainments have effected national revolutions, or otherwise distinguished themselves in the history of mankind. His consummate fortitude was tempered with the rarest gentleness, and the most active charity. His very copious and vivid imagination was chastised by the most accurate judgment, and was connected with the closest argumentative powers. Divine grace alone could effect so wonderful a combination; inasmuch, that for the space of near thirty years after his conversion, this man, whose natural haughtiness and fiery temper had hurried him into a very sanguinary course of persecution, lived the friend of mankind; returned good for evil continually; was a model of patience and benevolence, and steadily attentive only to heavenly things, while yet he had a taste, a spirit, and a genius, which might have shone among the greatest statesmen and men of letters that ever lived.

We have then in these two men, a strong specimen of what Grace can do, and we may fairly challenge all the infidels in the world, to produce any thing like them in the whole list of their heroes. Yet amidst the constant display of every godly and social virtue, we learn from Paul's own account, that he ever felt himself "carnal, sold under sin," and that sin dwelt in him continually. From his writings we learn, what the depth of human wickedness is: and none of the Apostles seem to have understood so much as he did, the riches of Divine Grace, and the peculiar glory of the Christian religion. The doctrines of election, justification, regeneration, adoption; of the priesthood and offices of Christ, and of the internal work of the Holy Ghost, as well as the most perfect morality founded on Christian principle, are to be found in his writings; and what Quintilian said of Cicero, may be justly applied to the Apostle of the Gentiles: "*Ille se profectus viat, cui Paulus valde placebat.*"

During this whole effusion of the Spirit, —of so little account in the sight of God are natural human excellencies and talents,—I see no evidence that any person of extraordinary genius and endowments,

* Orosius, B. 7.

† Titus i. 4.

St. Paul excepted, were employed in the divine work of propagating the Gospel. St. Luke, indeed, appears by his writings to have been a classical scholar of a chastised and regular taste; and to approach more nearly to attic purity of diction than any of the New Testament writers. But to St. Paul, the greatness of his conceptions, and the fervour of his zeal, gave a magnificent kind of negligence in composition,—in the midst of which there is also, if I mistake not, a vast assemblage of the most sublime excellencies of oratory, which demonstrate how high he might have stood in this line of eminence, had he been ambitious, or rather had he not been perfectly careless of such kind of fame. But that men so unlearned as the rest of the Apostles were,—none of whom appear by nature to have been above the ordinary standard of mankind, though by no means below that standard,—that such men should have been able of themselves to speak, to act, and to write as they did; and to produce such an amazing revolution in the ideas and manners of mankind, would require the most extravagant credulity to believe.—The power of God is demonstrated from the imbecility of the instruments.

The minds of men void of the love of God are always apt to suspect, as connected with fanaticism the most precious mysteries of the Gospel, and the whole work of experimental religion. And the more vigorously these things are described, the stronger the suspicion grows.—May not this have been one reason why St. Paul was directed to expose himself the most to this unjust censure, by dwelling more copiously than any of the rest of the Apostles on views most directly evangelical; St. Paul, I say,—because he must be allowed by all who are not willing to betray their own want of discernment, to have been a man of eminent solidity of understanding? If Christian experience be a foolish thing indeed, it is strange that the wisest of all the Christians should have been the most abundant in describing it.

Of St. Peter we have by no means so large an account as of St. Paul. The last view we have of him in Scripture presents him to us at Antioch. This was probably about the year 50.—
A. D. 50. After this he was employed principally among his own countrymen, but one cannot suppose exclusively of

Gentiles,—in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. His two epistles were directed to the Hebrew converts of these countries. And if he was far less successful than Paul among the Gentiles, he was much more so than that great man was among the Jews. He, who wrought effectually in Paul among the former, was mighty in Peter among the latter.* It should ever be remembered, who alone did the work, and gave the increase.

Peter probably came to Rome about the year 63. Thence, a little before his martyrdom, he wrote his two epistles.—Strange fictions have been invented of his acts at Rome, A. D. 63. of which I shall sufficiently testify my disbelief by silence,—the method which I intend constantly to use in things of this nature. It is evident however, that he here met again with that same Simon the sorcerer, whom he had rebuked long ago in Samaria, and who was practising his sorceries in a much higher style in the metropolis. No doubt the Apostle opposed him successfully; but we have no account of this matter, except a very vague and declamatory one by Eusebius. At length, when Paul was martyred under Nero, Peter suffered with him by crucifixion with his head downward,—a kind of death which he himself desired,—most probably from an unfeigned humility, that he might not die in the same manner as his Lord had done. Nicephorus informs us, that he had spent two years at Rome. St. Peter in his second epistle, observes, that his Lord had shown him, that his death was soon to take place. And this gives a degree of credibility to a story of Ambrose related in one of his discourses, the purport of which is, that the Pagans being incensed against him, the brethren begged him to retreat during the violence of the persecution. Their intreaties, ardent as he was for martyrdom, moved him. He began to go out of the city by night. But coming to the gate,† he saw Christ entering into the city. Whereupon he said, Lord, whither art thou going? Christ answered, I am coming hither to be crucified again. Peter hence understood that Christ was to be crucified again in his servant. This induced him voluntarily to

Crucifixion
of Peter.
A. D. 66
or 67.

* Gal. ii. 8. † Sermon cont. Aux. i. 11.

return; and he satisfied the minds of the brethren with this account, and was soon after seized and crucified. Whoever considers the very solemn manner in which our Lord foretold the violent death of this Apostle, in the close of St. John's Gospel; and that, in his second epistle, he himself declares that his divine Master had shown him, that he should quickly put off his tabernacle, will find no difficulty in concluding, that the vision* now related from Ambrose might have taken place a little before the writing of this epistle; and, that the writing of the epistle may have a little time preceded his seizure and violent death. I mention this as a probable conjecture only. The story itself is consonant to the miraculous powers then in the Church; and its evidence rests on the character of Ambrose himself, an Italian bishop, whose integrity and understanding are equally respectable.

Peter's wife had been called to martyrdom a little before himself. He saw her led to death; and repaired at the grace of God vouchsafed to her; and addressing her by name, exhorted and comforted her with "Remember the Lord."†

There are two striking attestations to the character of St. Peter, which may be fairly drawn from the sacred writings.—As it is allowed on all hands, that he authorized the publication of St. Mark's Gospel, had he been disposed to spare his own character, he would not have suffered the shameful denial of his Master to have been described, as it is in that Evangelist, with more aggravated circumstances of guilt, and with fainter views of his repentance, than are to be found in the other Evangelists. I am indebted for the other remark to Bishop Gregory, the first of that name. In his second epistle, St. Peter gives the most honorable attestation to the Apostle Paul's epistles, though he must know that in one of them—that to the Galatians—his own conduct on a particular occasion was censured. This is evidently above nature. The most unfeigned humility appears to have been an eminent part of the character of this Apostle, who, in his early days, was remarkable for the violence of his temper. His natural character was no uncommon one: Frank, open, active, courageous; un-

guine in his attachments and in his passions; no way deficient, but not eminent, in understanding,—a plain honest man; yet, by grace and supernatural wisdom, rendered an instrument of the greatest good in the conversion of numbers, and only inferior to St. Paul. He seems to have lived long in a state of matrimony; and by Clement's account, was industrious in the education of his children.

Mark was sister's son to Barnabas, the son of Mary, a pious woman of Jerusalem. He was probably brought up in Christianity from early life; and his conduct, for some time, gives credibility to an opinion, tolerably confirmed by experience, that early converts, or those who have been religiously brought up, do not make that vigorous progress in divine things generally, which those do, whose conversion has commenced after a life of much sin and vanity. Their views are apt to be comparatively faint, and their dispositions in religion languid and indolent. We are told by Epiphanius, that Mark was one of those who were offended at the words of Christ recorded in the 6th chapter of St. John; and that he then forsook him, but was afterwards recovered to his Saviour by means of Peter. After our Lord's ascension, he attended his uncle Barnabas with Paul; but soon left them and returned to Jerusalem. Barnabas however heping the best from one whom he held so dear, proposed him to Paul as their companion on some future occasion. After the rupture, which this occasioned, between the two Apostles, Barnabas took him as his companion to Cyprus. Undoubtedly his character improved. Some plants are slow of growth, but attain at length great vigour, and bear much fruit. Even Paul himself, who had been so much offended with him, at length declared, "he is profitable to me for the ministry."‡

From the epistle to the Colossians, it is evident that he was with the Apostle in his imprisonment at Rome. This was in the year 63. His Gospel was written by the desire of the believers at Rome about two years after. I know not when to fix the time of his coming to Egypt. But he is allowed to have founded the Church of Alexandria, and to have been buried there. He was succeeded by Anianus, of whom Euse-

Mark was
at Rome
with Paul:
A. D. 62.

* There is no necessity to consider Christ's appearance as any thing more than a vision.

† Clement, Strom. 7.

bius gives the highest eulogium. It is evident that the society of these three great men, Barnabas, Paul, and Peter, at different times was very useful to him.—Probably his natural indolence needed such incentives. In Mark then we seem to have noticed one of the first promoters of Christianity, of a cast of mind different from any we have hitherto reviewed. The variety of tempers and talents employed in the service of God, and sanctified by the same divine energy, affords a field of speculation neither unpleasing nor unprofitable.

Of the labours of nine Apostles, James, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, Jude, Simon, and Matthias, scarcely any thing is recorded.

Of John the Apostle a few valuable fragments may be collected. He was

Council of
Jerusalem:

A. D. 50.

present at the council of Jerusalem, which was held about the year 50: nor is it probable, that he left Judea till that time. Asia Minor was the great theatre of his ministry, particularly Ephesus, the care of which Church remained with him after the decease of the rest of the Apostles. The breaking out of the war in Judea most probably obliged the Apostle to bid a total farewell to his native country. While he resided at Ephesus, going once to bathe there, he perceived that Cerinthus was in the bath: He came out again hastily: Let us flee, says he, lest the bath should fall, while Cerinthus, an enemy of truth, is within it. The same story is told of Ebion as well as of Cerinthus: they were both heretics, and of a similar character: and it is an easy mistake for a reporter of the story to confound names; but if the whole should have had no foundation, it is not easy to account for the fiction. The testimony of Irenæus, who had it from persons who received their information from Polycarp the disciple of St. John, seems sufficiently authentic. Irenæus, a man of exquisite judgment, evidently believed the story himself; and surely the opinion of such a person, who lived near those times, must outweigh the fanciful criticisms and objections of modern authors. The fashion of the present age, humanely sceptical, and clothing profane indifference with the name of candour, is ever ready to seduce even good men into a disbelief of facts of this nature, however well attested. But let the circumstances of St. John be well considered. He was

a surviving apostolical luminary. Heretical pravity was deeply spreading its poison. Sentiments, very derogatory to the person, work, and honour of Jesus Christ, were diffused with great perverseness of industry. What should have been the department of this truly benevolent Apostle? I doubt not but he was ever forward to relieve personal distresses: but to have joined the company of the principal supporters of heresy, would have been to countenance it. He well knew the arts of seducers. They were ready always to avail themselves of the seeming countenance of Apostles or of apostolical men; and thence to take an opportunity of strengthening themselves, and of diffusing their poison. Such has been their conduct in all ages. Having no ground of their own to stand on, they have continually endeavoured to rest on the authority of some great man of allowed evangelical respectability. This artful management, clothed with the pretence of charity, points out to the real friends of the Lord Jesus, what they ought to do, from motives of real benevolence to mankind,—namely, to bear patiently the odious charge of bigotry, and to take every opportunity of testifying their abhorrence of heretical views and hypocritical actions. Humanly speaking, I see not how divine truth is to be supported in the world, but by this procedure; and I scruple not to say, that St. John's conduct appears not only defensible, but laudable, and worthy the imitation of Christians. It is agreeable to what he himself declares in one of his short epistles, addressed to a Christian lady,—that if “any come to her house, and bring not the true doctrine of the Gospel, she ought not to receive him, nor bid him God speed; because to bid him God speed, would make her partake of his evil deeds.” His menacing language concerning Diotrephes, in the other epistle to Gaius, breathes, what some would call, the same uncharitable spirit. And when I see St. Paul shaking his garment against the infidel Jews, and hear him saying, “Your blood be on your own heads, I am clean;” and when I find him warning the Galatians thus, “If an angel from heaven should preach any other doctrine, let him be accursed,” and wishing that they which troubled them, “were even cut off,”—I am instructed how to judge of the indignation of holy St. John against Cerinthus.

Indeed the primitive Christians were even more careful to avoid the society of false Christians than of open unbelievers. With the latter they had, at times, some free intercourse; with the former they refused even to eat.* We have already seen, how our Saviour commends the impatience and discernment of the Ephesians, who could not bear false professors. They had tried those who call themselves "Apostles, and are not; and had found them liars."

It is one of the designs of this History, to show the actual conduct of real Christians in life and conversation: and the relation before us, of John's behaviour to Cerinthus, illustrates this. But,—if we must so far humour the taste of Socinians and sceptics as to allow ourselves to doubt the existence of well-attested facts because they contradict the fashionable torrent, we shall ignore the faithfulness of history, make present manners the standard of credibility, and practically adopt a very absurd andish position,—that the divine charity of a sound Christian, is the same thing as the refined humanity of a philosophical heretic.—I would ask any person, to whom the infection of modern manners renders this reasoning of difficult digestion, whether he ought more to approve of the conduct of one gentleman who should mix in easy familiarity with a company of murderers, or of another who should fly from it with horror. If we believe spiritual murderers, who labour to ruin souls by propagating Antichristian views, to be still more pernicious than the former, we shall not be under any difficulty in vindicating St. John.

The unreasonable doubts that have arisen in our times concerning the fact we have been considering, appear to me to originate in a spirit of heresy. There is another fact, respecting the same Apostle, which comes before us loaded with similar sceptical objections: and these are to be ascribed, I fear, to the prevalence of deism. Tertullian† tells us, that, by order of Domitian, John was cast into a caldron of boiling oil, and came out again without being hurt. This must have happened, most probably, during the latter part of the reign of that emperor; and Tertullian was certainly competent to relate such a fact as this:—Yet it is now generally disbelieved or doubted. Is it because we see no miracles

in our own times? Let the reader transport himself into the first century; and he will see no more improbability, in the nature of the thing, that a miracle should be wrought in favour of St. John, than in favour of Paul, as recorded in the last chapter of the Acts. The miracle softened not the heart of Domitian, who would probably suppose the Apostle to have been fortified by magical incantations. He banished him into the solitary isle of Patmos, where he was favoured with the visions of the Apocalypse. After Domitian's death, he returned from Patmos, and governed the Asiatic churches. There he remained till the time of Trajan. At the request of the bishops, he went to the neighbouring churches, partly to ordain pastors, and partly to regulate the congregations. At one place in his tour, observing a youth of a remarkable interesting countenance, he warmly recommended him to the care of a particular pastor. The young man was baptized; and for a time, lived as a Christian. But being gradually corrupted by company, he became idle and intemperate; and at length so dishonest, as to become a captain of a band of robbers. Some time after John had occasion to inquire of the pastor concerning the young man, who told him, that he was now dead to God; and that he inhabited a mountain over against his church.* John, in the vehemence of his charity, went to the place, and exposed himself to be taken by the robbers. "Bring me, says he, to your captain." The young robber beheld him coming; and as soon as he knew the aged and venerable Apostle, he was struck with shame, and fled.—St. John followed him and cried, My son, why fleest thou from thy Father, unarmed and old? Fear not; as yet there remaineth hope of salvation. Believe me, Christ hath sent me. Hearing this, the young man stood still, trembled, and wept bitterly. John prayed, exhorted, and brought him back to the society of Christians; nor did he leave him, till he judged him fully restored by Divine Grace.

Even the truth of this last relation has been questioned by Basnage. But as I know no reason for hesitation, I shall leave it with the serious reader, who loves to behold the tokens of Grace from age to age dispensed to sinners.

We have yet another story of St. John,

* 1 Cor. v. 10, 11. † *Prescript. Her.*

* *Clem. Alex. apud Euseb.*

short, but pleasing, and which has had the good fortune to pass uncontradicted. Being now very old, and unable to say much in Christian assemblies, "Children, love one another," was his constantly repeated sermon. Being asked, why he told them only one thing, he answered, that "nothing else was needed." This account rests on the single testimony of Jerom, so far as I have found. But as it seems to fall in with the spirit of the age more than the others, its truth is allowed. We may hence observe how little regard is paid to real evidence by many critics, who seem to make modern manners the test of historical credibility. Whatever fact shows the spirit of zeal, the reality of miracles, or the work of the Divine Spirit on the heart, must be questioned: What indicates feeling or humanity, this only must be allowed to stand its ground. In truth, I should be sorry to have so beautiful a story called in question; but its evidences are by no means superior to those of the three former.

John lived three or four years after his return to Asia, having been preserved to the age of almost a hundred years, for the benefit of the Church of Christ, an inestimable pattern of charity and goodness.

Of the Apostle Barnabas nothing is known, except what is recorded in the Acts. There we have an honourable encomium of his character, and a particular description of his joint labours with St. Paul. It is a great injury to him, to apprehend the epistle, which goes by his name, to be his.

The work of Hermas, though truly pious and probably written by the person mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans, is yet a composition of inferior merit; nor is it worth while to detain the reader concerning it. Indeed we have no ecclesiastical work, exclusive of the Scriptures, except one, which does any peculiar honour to the first century. To believe, to suffer, to love,—not to write, was the primitive taste.

The work which I except is Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians. This is he, whom Paul calls his fellow-labourer, whose "name is in the book of life." He long survived Paul and Peter, and was no doubt a blessing to the Roman Church, over which he presided nine years. His epistle was read in many

primitive churches, and was admired exceedingly by the ancients. It has a simplicity and a plainness, not easily relished by a systematic modern; but there belongs to it, also, a wonderful depth of holiness and wisdom. A few quotations relating to its history, its doctrine, and its spirit, will not improperly close this account of the pastors of the first century.

Its history will bring again to our view the Church of Corinth, which we have already seen distracted with schisms and contentions, and more disgracing its high calling with secular ambition than any other primitive Church. From the testimony of Clement it appears that St. Paul's two epistles had been abundantly useful; and that he had reason to rejoice in the confidence which he reposed in the sincerity of profession, which prevailed in many of them, notwithstanding these evils. The account which he gives of their good situation, may justly be considered as the proper fruit of apostolical admonitions.—"What strangers that came among you, did not take honourable notice formerly of the firmness and fulness of your faith? Who of them did not admire the sobriety and gentleness of your godly spirit in Christ? Who did not extol the liberal practice of your Christian hospitality? How admirable was your sound and mature knowledge of divine things? Ye were wont to do all things without respect to persons; and ye walked in the ways of God in due subjection to your pastors, and submitting yourselves the younger to the elder. Ye charged young men to attend to the gravity and moderation becoming the Christian character; young women to discharge their duties with a blameless, holy, and chaste conscientiousness; to love their husbands with all suitable tenderness and fidelity; and to guide the house in all soberness and gravity. Then ye all showed an humble spirit, void of boasting and arrogance, more ready to obey than to command, more ready to give than to receive. Content with the divine allotments, and attending diligently to the word of Christ, ye were enlarged in your bowels of love; and his sufferings on the cross were before your eyes. Hence a profound and happy peace was imparted to you all: an unwearied desire of doing good, and a plentiful effusion of the Holy Ghost was with you. Full of holy counsel, in all readiness of mind, with godly assurance of

faith, ye stretched forth your hands to the Lord Almighty, entreating him to be gracious to you, if in any thing ye unwil-
lingly offended. Your care was, day and night, for all the brethren: that the number of his elect might be saved in mercy and a good conscience. Ye were indeed sincere and harmless, and forgiving one another. All dissension and schism in the Church was abominable to you: ye mourned over the faults of your neighbours; ye sympathized with their infirmities as your own; ye were unwearied in all goodness, and ready to every good work. Adorned with a venerable and upright conversation, ye performed all things in his fear; and the law of God was written deep indeed on the tables of your hearts."

It is pleasing to see this numerous Church, of whom our Saviour had so long ago declared that "he had much people in this city," toward the close of the century, still alive in the faith, hope, and charity of the Gospel, free in a great degree from the evils, which had cost St. Paul so much care and grief, and preserving the vigour of true Christianity. But history must be faithful: and their decline is described in the same epistle. Pride and a schismatical spirit, which have since tarnished so many churches, and which were evils particularly Corinthian, defaced this agreeable picture. But let Clement speak for himself:

"Thus, when all glory and enlargement were given to you, that Scripture was fulfilled, 'Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked.' Hence, envy, strife, dissension, persecution, disorder, war, and desolation have seized your church. 'The child has behaved himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable, the mean against the eminent, and the foolish against the wise.' Hence righteousness and peace are far from you; because ye all leave the fear of God; and your spiritual sight is become too dim to be guided by the faith of the Gospel. Ye walk not in his ordinances, nor walk worthy of the Lord Christ; but ye all walk too much according to your own evil lusts, nourishing and cherishing a malignant spirit of envy, by which the first death came into the world."

The schism pregnant with so many evils gave occasion to this epistle. It seems the distracted Corinthians asked counsel of the Church of Rome; and her venerable pastor wrote this epistle in con-

sequence of their request. He apologizes, indeed, for the delay of writing, which he imputes to the afflictions and distresses which befel the Christians of Rome,* most probably on account of Domitian's persecution, the letter itself being written about the year 94, or 95. In these times the sin of schism was looked on with the greatest horror. Clement calls the promoters of it, "the haughty, disorderly leaders of the abominable schism."—It is no trifling guilt, which men incur, by precipitately giving themselves up to the will of those, whose aim is strife and the advancement of a sect or party, not the interest of godliness. He speaks of persons, who talk of peace with their lips, while their conduct shows, that they love to break the unity of the Church; like the hypocrite, who draws nigh to "the Lord with his lips, while his heart is far from him."

The attentive reader cannot but observe, how the same evil prevails in our days to the great injury of real piety; and yet how little it is deplored; rather, how much encouraged and promoted by specious representations of liberty, of the right of private judgment, of a just contempt of implicit faith, and of pleas of conscience. Doubtless, from these topics there are deducible arguments of great moment, and which deserve the most serious attention in practical concerns: but, at present, it is not my province to explain the middle path in this subject, nor to prove that modern evangelical Churches are far gone into the vicious extreme of schism.

Vera rerum VOCABULA amamus.

However some persons may triumph in effecting separations from FAITHFUL pastors, it is a shameful and an unchristian practice; and perhaps humble spirits may, from Clement himself, acquire sufficient instruction, how to discriminate the spirit of conscientious zeal from that of schism, and to know when they ought not to separate from the Church to which they belong.

"The Apostles," says he, "with the greatest care ordained the rulers of the Church, and delivered a rule of succession in future, that after their decease other approved men might succeed. These then who, by them, or in succession by other choice, were ordained rulers with the approbation and concurrence of the whole

* The second persecution of the Christians, was by Domitian, A. D. 95.

Church; and who in a blameless conduct have ministered to the flock of Christ in humility; who for a series of years have been well reported of by all men, these we think it unrighteous to deprive of the ministry. Nor is it a sin of small magnitude, to eject from the sacred office men whose ministry hath been thus blameless and holy. Happy those presbyters, who have finished their course, and have departed in peace and in the fruitful discharge of their duties! They at least, remote from envy and faction, are not subject to popular caprice, nor exposed to the danger of outliving the affections of their flocks, and their own unfruitfulness. We see with grief, brethren, that ye have deprived of the ministry some of your godly pastors, whose labours for your souls deserved a different treatment." And he goes on to show, that godly men in Scripture "were indeed persecuted, but by the wicked; were imprisoned, but by the unholy; were stoned, but by the enemies of God; were murdered, but by the profane. Was Daniel cast into the den of lions by men who feared God? Were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace by men who worshipped the Most High?"

What the sin of schism is,—in what manner the Corinthians were guilty of it,—and how far all this is applicable to the case of Churches at this day, will need but little comment.

Clement afterwards reminds them of their former guilt in St. Paul's time. "Do take up the writings of the blessed Apostle; what did he say to you in the beginning of the Gospel? Truly, by Divine Inspiration, he gave you directions concerning himself, and Cephas and Apollos, because even then ye were splitting into parties. But your party-spirit at that time had less evil in it, because it was exercised in favour of Apostles of eminent holiness, and of one much approved of by them. But now consider who they are that have subverted you, and broken the bonds of brotherly love. These are shameful things, brethren, very shameful! Oh, tell it not on Christian ground, that the ancient and flourishing Church of Corinth, have quarrelled with their pastors, from a weak partiality for one or two persons. This rumour hath not only reached us Christians, but is spread among infidels: so that the name of God is blasphemed

through your folly; and your own spiritual health is endangered indeed." After exhorting them with much pathos to heal the breaches, he, towards the close, beseeches them—"to send back our messengers shortly in peace with joy, that they may quickly bring us the news of your concord, which we so ardently long for; that we may speedily rejoice on your account."

What effect on the Corinthians this kind animadversion produced we know not: The whole history of the schism certainly deserved to be noticed: It is related by the faithful pen of Clement; and the spirit of declension from simple Christianity, and the way by which the Spirit of God is commonly provoked to depart from churches once flourishing in holiness, are well described. Human nature appears to have been always the same: And this example affords a standing admonition to Christian churches to beware of that nice, factious, and licentious spirit, which, under pretence of superior discernment and regard for liberty of conscience, has often broken the bonds of peace, and sometimes subjected the best of pastors to suffer, from a people professing godliness, what might have been expected only from persons altogether impious and profane.

No apology, I trust, can be necessary for laying before the reader, from the same excellent author, the following occasional exhortation. "Set before your eyes the holy Apostles.—Through the enmity of the human heart Peter underwent a variety of afflictions; and having suffered martyrdom, departed to the due place of glory. Through the hatred of a wicked world Paul having been scourged, stoned, and seven times cast into prison, obtained at length the reward of his patience: Having preached the Gospel in the east and west, he obtained a good report through faith: Having preached righteousness to the utmost bounds of the West, and having suffered martyrdom from princes, he left this world, and reached the shore of a blessed immortality:—He was an eminent pattern of those, who suffer for righteousness' sake. By the godly conversation and labours of these men, a great multitude of the elect was gathered together; who, through similar hatred of the world, were afflicted with cruel torments, and obtained a similar good report among us through faith. Through the operation of the same principle, even women among

us have sustained the most cruel and unrighteous sufferings, and finished in patient faith their course, and received, notwithstanding the weakness of their sex, the prize of Christian heroines."

The nature of the epistle being practical, and those to whom it was written not being corrupted in their sentiments, much of doctrine by accurate exposition and enforcement is not to be expected. Yet the fundamentals of godliness are very manifest: Salvation only by the blood of Christ, the necessity of repentance in all men,—because all men are guilty before God,—THESE GREAT TRUTHS he supposes, and builds on continually. "Let us steadfastly behold the blood of Christ, and see how precious it is in the sight of God, which being shed for our salvation, hath procured the Grace of Repentance for all the world."

And the nature and necessity of lively faith, as a principle of all true goodness and happiness, and perfectly distinct from the dead historical assent, with which it is by many so unhappily confounded, is well illustrated in the case of Lot's wife. "She had another spirit, another heart: hence, she was made a monument of the Lord's indignation, a pillar of salt to this day; that all the earth in all generations may know, that the double-minded, who stagger at the promises of God, and distrust the power of grace in unbelief, shall obtain nothing of the Lord, but the signal display of his vengeance."

The divine dignity and glory of our Saviour, is well described in these words: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sceptre of the Majesty of God, came not in the pomp of arrogance or pride; for, notwithstanding his power, he was meek and lowly."

The doctrine of Election, in connexion with holiness, as the Scripture always states it, appears remarkably distinct in this epistle. A passage may properly be introduced here, to show that it was a primitive doctrine, and made use of for the promotion of a holy life:

"Let us go to him in sanctification of heart, lifting up holy hands to him, influenced by the love of our gracious and compassionate Father, who hath made us for himself a portion of the election. For thus it is written, 'When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, and as it were separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of his servants.

'The Lord's portion is his people: Jacob is the cord of his inheritance.' And in another place he says, 'Behold the Lord taketh to himself a nation from the midst of the nations, as a man taketh to himself the first fruits of his threshing floor; and from that nation shall proceed the most holy things.'

"Since therefore we are the HOLY ONE'S portion, let us be careful to abound in all things which appertain to holiness."•

But the distinguishing doctrine of Christianity, without which indeed the Gospel is a mere name, and incapable of consoling sinners, is doubtless justification by the Grace of Christ through faith alone. See the following testimony to it in this author. It deserves to be distinctly remembered, as an unequivocal proof of the faith of the primitive Church.

"All these," he is speaking of the Old Testament fathers, "were magnified and honoured, not through themselves, not through their own works, not through the righteous deeds which they performed, but through HIS WILL. And we also by his will being called in Christ Jesus, are JUSTIFIED not by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or by the works which we have wrought in holiness of heart, but by FAITH;—by which the Almighty hath justified all, who are or have been justified from the beginning."

His quick perception of the common objection,—what need then of good works?—his ready answer to it, and his manner of stating the necessity of good works, and of placing them on their proper basis, show how deeply he had studied, and how exquisitely he relished and felt St. Paul's doctrines:—

"But what then! Shall we neglect good works? Does it hence follow, that we should leave the law of loving obedience? God forbid;—let us rather hasten with all earnestness of mind to every good work; for the Lord himself rejoices in his works. Having such a pattern, how strenuously should we follow his will, and work the works of righteousness with all our might."

The doctrine of the work of the Spirit on the heart, and of the experience of his consolations in the soul, which, in our days, is so generally charged with enthusiasm, appears from the following passage:

"How blessed, how amazing the gifts of God; beloved! Life in immortality,—splendour in righteousness,—truth in liberty,—faith in assurance,—sobriety in holiness!—And thus far in this life we know experimentally. If the earnestness of the Spirit be so precious, what must be the things which God hereafter hath prepared for them that wait for him!"

I forbear to produce his views of the resurrection, and his beautiful manner of supporting the doctrine by the analogy of nature, after the manner of St. Paul. His mistake in applying the story of the Arabian Phoenix has been, I think, too severely censured. None in truth ought to censure it as a blemish, except those who can so much compliment their own sagacity, as to say, that they in like circumstances would not have done the same. If the fact had been true, it doubtless would have afforded a happy illustration of the doctrine of a resurrection. The story was generally believed in his days. That Clement believed it, is no proof of weakness of judgment: and nobody contends, that his epistle, in the proper and strict sense of the word, is written by inspiration.

What men are by nature,—how dark and miserable;—what they become by converting grace in the renewal of the understanding, is thus expressed: "Through him, that is, through Jesus Christ, let us behold the glory of God shining in his face: Through him the eyes of our hearts were opened: Through him our understanding, dark and foolish as it was, rises again into his marvellous light: Through him the Lord would have us to taste of immortal knowledge."

This epistle seems to come as near to apostolical simplicity, as any thing we have on record: The illustration of its spirit would show this abundantly. It is difficult to do this by single passages: A temper so heavenly, meek, holy, charitable, patient, yet fervent, pious, and humble, runs through the whole. The following specimen deserves the reader's notice:

"Christ is their's, who are poor in spirit, and lift not up themselves above the flock; but are content to be low in the Church."—"Let us obey our spiritual pastors, and honour our elders, and let the younger be disciplined in the fear of God. Let our wives be directed to what is good; to follow chastity, modesty, meekness, sincerity. Let them evidence their power

of self-government by their silence; and let them show love, not in the spirit of a sect or party, but to all who fear God." Again, "Let not the strong despise the weak: and let the weak reverence the strong. Let the rich communicate to the poor; and let the poor be thankful to God, for those through whom their wants are supplied. Let the wise exert his wisdom, not merely in words, but in good works. Let the humble prove his humility, not by testifying of himself how humble he is; but by a conduct that may occasion others to give testimony to him: Let not the chaste be proud of his chastity, knowing that from God he has received the gift of continency." "Have we not all one God, one Christ, one spirit of Grace poured upon us, and one calling in Christ? Why do we separate and distract the members of Christ, and fight against our own body, and arrive at such a height of madness, as to forget that we are members one of another?"

"Is any among you strong in faith, mighty in knowledge, gifted in utterance, judicious in doctrines, and pure in conduct? The more he appears exalted above others, the more need has he to be poor in spirit; and to take care, that he look not to his own things; but that he study to promote the common good of the Church."

"Every one, whose heart has any good degree of the fear and love, which is the result of our common hope, would rather that he himself be exposed to censure than his neighbours; and would rather condemn himself, than break that beautiful bond of brotherly love, which is delivered to us."

After pressing the beautiful example of the charity of Moses, recorded in the book of Exodus,* he says, "Who of you has any generosity of sentiment, or bowels of compassion, or fulness of love? Let him say, if the strife and schism be on my account: I will depart, wherever you please, and perform whatever the Church shall require. Only let Christ's flock live in peace with their settled pastors. Surely the Lord will smile on such a character."†

* Ex. xxxii.

† Such sentiments as these, coming from the pen of a writer, whom St. Paul (1 ch. Phil. and 3d v.) describes as his fellow-labourer, and also as one whose name is in the book of life, cannot fail to be grateful to every sound and pious Christian.

III. The reader will not expect that I should solemnly register the names,

Hermas
of the first
Century.

and record the opinions and acts of those who are commonly called heretics. I have only to view them in one single light, namely, as they deviated from the spirit of the Gospel. Let us keep in view what that really is. The simple faith of Christ as the only Saviour of lost sinners, and the effectual influences of the Holy Ghost in recovering souls altogether depraved by sin,—these are the leading ideas.

When the effusion of the Holy Ghost first took place, these things were taught with power; and no sentiments, which militated against them, could be supported for a moment. As, through the prevalence of human corruption and the crafts of Satan, the love of the truth was lessened, heresies and various abuses of the Gospel appeared: and in estimating them, we may form some idea of the declension of true religion toward the end of the century, which doubtless was not confined to the Jewish Church, but appeared, in a measure, to have affected the Gentiles also.

The epistolary part of the New Testament affords but too ample proof of corruptions. The Apostle Paul guards the Romans against false teachers, one mark of whose character was, that "by good words and fair speeches they deceive the hearts of the simple."* Corinth was full of evils of this kind. Their false apostles transformed themselves into the appearance of real ones. The Jewish corruption of self-righteousness, which threatened the destruction of the Galatian Church, has been distinctly considered. Many Christians, so called, walked as enemies of the cross of Christ, "whose end was destruction, whose god was their belly, whose glory was in their shame, who minded earthly things."† So Paul tells the Philippians, and with tears of charity.—The epistle to the Colossians proves, that pretty strong symptoms of that amazing mass of austerities and superstitions by which, in after ages, the purity of the faith was so much clouded, and of that self-righteousness which superseded men's regard to the mediation of Jesus and the glory of Divine Grace, had begun to discover themselves, even in the Apostles' days.

The prophecy of Antichrist, in the first epistle of Timothy, chapter the fourth, expressly intimates, that its spirit had already commenced by the excessive esteem of celibacy and abstinence. The corrupt mixtures of vain philosophy had also seduced some from the faith. Under the gradual increase of these complicated evils, a meaner religious taste was formed, at least in several churches, which could even bear to admire such injudicious writers as Hermas and the Pseudo-Barnabas.*—Peter, and Jude,† have graphically described certain horrible enormities of nominal Christians, little, if at all, inferior to the most scandalous vices of the same kind in these latter ages. The spirit of schism we have seen again breaking out in the Church of Corinth.—But let us observe more distinctly the HERETICAL opinions of the first century.

Ecclesiastical historians, who have passed by the most glorious scenes of real Christianity, have yet with minute accuracy given us the lists of heretics, subtilized by refined subdivisions without end. It seems more useful to notice them, as they stand contradistinguished to that FAITH which was once delivered to the saints. Tertullian reduces the heretics of the apostolic times to two classes, the Docetæ, and the Ebionites. Theodoret also gives the same account of them.

Of the instruments of Satan in these things, Simon, who had been rebuked by Peter in Samaria, was the most remarkable; he was the father of the Gnostics or Docetæ, and of a number of heretical opinions and practices of the first century. However obscure the history of Simon himself may be, the leading opinions of the Docetæ are sufficiently obvious. They held that the Son of God had no proper humanity, and that he died on the cross only in appearance.—Cerinthus allowed him a real human nature: he considered Jesus as a man born of Joseph and Mary; but supposed that Christ,—whom yet all the heretics looked on as properly inferior to the supreme God,—descended from heaven, and united himself to the man Jesus.

The Ebionites were not much different from the Cerinthians: they removed the appearance of mystery from the subject: In general they looked on Jesus Christ

* Rom. xvi.

† Philipp. iii.

* 2 Pet.

† Jude's Epistle.

as a mere man born of Mary and her husband, though a man of a most excellent character.—Whoever thinks it needful to examine these things more nicely, may consult Irenæus and Eusebius: The account of Ebion in the latter is short, but sufficiently clear.

It is not to be wondered at, that with such low ideas of the Redeemer's person, the Ebionites denied the virtue of his atoning blood; and laboured to establish justification by the works of the law. Their rejection of the divine authority of St. Paul's epistles, and their accusation of him as an Antinomian, naturally arise from their system. Tertullian tells us, that this was a Jewish sect: and their observance of Jewish rites makes his account the more credible.

These two heretical schemes, the one opposing the humanity of Christ, the other annihilating the divinity, were the inventions of men leaning to their own understandings, and unwilling to admit the great mystery of godliness,—“God manifest in the flesh.” The primitive Christians held, that the Redeemer was both God and man, equally possessed of the real properties of both natures; and no man, willing to take his creed from the New Testament, ever thought otherwise; the proofs of both natures in one person, Christ Jesus, being abundantly diffused through the sacred books. One single verse in the ninth chapter to the Romans,* expressing both, is sufficient to confound all the critical powers of heretics: and therefore on the slightest grounds, they have been compelled to have recourse to their usual method of suspecting the soundness of the sacred text. The only real difficulty in this subject is, for man to be brought to believe, on divine authority, that doctrine, the grounds of which we cannot comprehend. Though we have just as good reason to doubt the union of soul and body in man, from our equal ignorance of the bond of that union, yet proud men, unacquainted with the internal misery and depravity of nature, which renders a complete character, like that of Christ, so divinely suitable to our wants, and so exactly proper to mediate between God and man, soon discovered a disposition to oppose the doctrine of the Incarnation of Jesus; and, as there were

two ways of doing this—by taking away either one or the other of the two natures—we see at once the origin of the two sects before us. The doctrine of the atonement was opposed by both;—by the Docetæ in their denial of the real human nature of Jesus; and by the Ebionites in their denial of the Divine Nature, which stamps an infinite value on his sufferings.

Such were the perversions of the doctrines of the incarnation and atonement of the Son of God. Nor did the doctrine of justification by faith only, which St. Paul had so strenuously supported, escape a similar treatment. In all ages this doctrine has been either fiercely opposed, or basely abused. The epistle to the Galatians describes the former treatment; the epistle of Jude the latter.—The memoirs of these heretics, short and imperfect as they are, inform us of some, who professed an extraordinary degree of sanctity, and affected to be abstracted altogether from the flesh, and to live in excessive abstemiousness. We find also that there were others, who, as if to support their Christian liberty, lived in sin with greediness, and indulged themselves in all the gratifications of sensuality. Nothing short of a spiritual illumination and direction can indeed secure the improvement of the grace of the Gospel to the real interests of holiness. At this day there are persons, who think that the entire renunciation of all our own works in point of dependence must be the destruction of practical religion; and they are thence led to seek salvation “by the works of the law:” while others, admitting in words the grace of Jesus Christ, encourage themselves in open sin. A truly humbled frame, and a clear insight into the beauty of holiness, through the effectual influence of the Divine Spirit, will teach men to live a sanctified life by the faith of Jesus. The Gentile converts by the Gnostic heresy, and the Jewish by that of Ebion, were considerably corrupted towards the close of the century. The latter indeed of these heresies had been gradually making progress for some time. We have seen, that the object of the first council of Jerusalem was to guard men against the imposition of Mosaic observances, and to teach them to rely on the grace of Christ for salvation. But self-righteousness is a weed of too quick a growth to be easily eradicated. The Pharisaic Christians, we may apprehend, were not immediately ad-

* Verse 5. Whose are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

vanced to the full size of heresy. But when they proceeded to reject St. Paul's writings, we may fairly conclude, that they fully rejected the article of justification.—A separation was made; and the Ebionites, as a distinct body of men, deserved the name of heretics.

St. Paul indeed, who, with an eagle's eye, had explored the growing evil, was now no more in the world. But the HEAD of the Church prolonged the life of his favourite John to the extreme age of almost a hundred: and his authority checked the progress of heretical pravity. He resided much at Ephesus, where Paul had declared, that grievous wolves would make their appearance. Jerom says, that he wrote his Gospel at the desire of the bishops of Asia, against Cerinthus and Ebion. Indeed such expressions as these, "the passover, a feast of the Jews,"—and, "that Sabbath day was a high day," seem to indicate that the Jewish polity was now no more, it not being natural to give such explanations of customs, except to those, who had no opportunity of constant inspection. I cannot but think, that Dr. Lardner, who is no friend to the vital doctrines of Christianity, has betrayed his predilection for Socinianism, in his attempts to show that St. John in his Gospel did not intend to oppose any particular heresies.* In truth, there are various internal proofs which corroborate the testimony of Jerom. The very beginning of his Gospel is an authoritative declaration of the proper Deity of Jesus Christ. The attentive reader cannot but recollect various discourses to the same purport: The confession of Thomas, after his resurrection, stands single in St. John's Gospel: The particular pains, which he takes, to assure us of the real death of his Master, and of the issuing of real blood and water, from his wounded side, are delivered with an air of earnestness to obviate the error of the Docetæ: Nor can I understand his laying so great a stress on Jesus Christ's coming in the flesh, in any other manner.

While this Apostle lived, the heretics were much discommoded. And it is certain that Gnostics and Ebionites were always looked on as perfectly distinct from the Christian Church. There needs no more evidence to prove this, than their

arrangement by Irenæus and Eusebius under heretical parties. Doubtless they called themselves Christians; and so did all heretics, for obvious reasons; and, for reasons, equally obvious, all, who are tender of the fundamentals of Christ's religion, should not own their right to the appellation. Before we dismiss them I would remark,—

1. That it does not appear by any evidence which I can find, that these men were persecuted for their religion. Retaining the Christian name; and yet glorifying man's righteousness, wisdom, and strength, "they spake of the world, and the world heard them." The Apostle John in saying this, had his eye, I believe, on the Docetæ particularly. In our own times persons of a similar stamp would willingly ingratiate themselves with real Christians; and yet at the same time avoid the cross of Christ, and whatever would expose them to the enmity of the world. We have the testimony of Justin Martyr, that Simon was honoured in the pagan world, even to idolatry.*—What stress is laid on this circumstance in the New Testament, as an evidence of the characters of men in religious concerns, is well known.

2. If it be made an objection against evangelical principles, that numbers, who profess them, have run into a variety of abuses, perversions, and contentions, we have seen enough, even in the first century, of the same kind of evils, to convince us, that such objections militate not against divine truth, but might have been made with equal force against the apostolical age.

3. A singular change in one respect has taken place in the Christian world.—The two heretical parties above described, were not much unlike the Arians and Socinians at this day. The former have, radically, the same ideas as the Docetæ, though it would be unjust to accuse them of the Anthropomorphite abominations which deified the followers of Simon: The latter are the very counterpart of the Ebionites. The Trinitarians were then the body of the Church; and so much superior was their influence and numbers, that the other two were treated as heretics.—At present the two parties, who agree in lessening the dignity of Christ, though in an unequal manner, are carrying on a vigorous controversy against one another.

* See his Supplement to the Credibility, in the Letters of St. John.

† 1 John iv.

* Apud Euseb. B. ii. E. II.

while the Trinitarians are despised by both as unworthy the notice of men of reason and letters. Serious and humble minds will, however, insist on the necessity of our understanding that certain fundamental principles are necessary to constitute the real Gospel. The Divinity of Christ, his atonement,—justification by faith,—regeneration,—these they will have observed to be the principles of the primitive Church: and, within this inclosure, the whole of that piety which produced such glorious effects has been confined: and it is worthy the attention of learned men to consider, whether the same remark may not be made in all ages.

4. Thus have we seen a more astonishing revolution in the human mind and in human manners, than ever took place in any age, effected without any human power, legal or illegal, and even against the united opposition of all the powers then in the world, and this too not in countries rude or uncivilized, but in the most humanized, the most learned, and the most polished part of the globe,—within the Roman empire, no part of which was exempted from a sensible share in its effects.—This empire, within the first century at least, seems to have been the proper limit of Christian conquests.*

If an infidel or sceptic can produce any thing like this, effected by Mahometanism or by any other religion of the human invention, he may then with some plausibility compare those religions with Christianity: But, as the Gospel stands unrivalled in its manner of subduing the minds of men,—the argument for its divinity, from its propagation in the world, will remain invincible.

And, surely, every dispassionate observer must confess, that the change was from BAD to GOOD. No man will venture to say, that the religious and moral principles of Jews and Gentiles, before their conversion to Christianity, were good.—The idolatries, abominations, and ferocity

of the Gentile world will be allowed to have been not less than they are described in the first chapter to the Romans: and the writings of Horace and Juvenal will prove, that the picture is not exaggerated. The extreme wickedness of the Jews is graphically delineated by their own historian, and is neither denied nor doubted by any one. What but the influence of God, and an effusion of his Holy Spirit,—the first of the kind since the coming of Christ, and the measure and standard for regulating our views of all succeeding ones,—can account for such a change? From the Acts of the Apostles and their Epistles, I have drawn the greatest part of the narrative; but the little that has been added from other sources is not heterogeneous.—Here are thousands of men turned from the practice of every wickedness to the practice of every virtue: many, very suddenly, or at least in a short space of time, reformed in understanding, in inclination, in affection; knowing, loving, and confiding in God; from a state of mere selfishness converted into the purest philanthropists: living only to please God and to exercise kindness toward one another; and all of them, recovering really, what philosophy only pretended to,—the dominion of reason over passion: unfeignedly subject to their Maker; rejoicing in his favour amidst the severest sufferings: and serenely waiting for their dismission into a land of blissful immortality. That all this must be of God, is demonstrative: but the important inference, which teaches the divine authority of Christ, and the wickedness and danger of despising, or even neglecting him, is not always attended to by those who are most concerned in it.

But the Christian Church was not yet in possession of any external dignity or political importance. No one nation as yet was Christian, though thousands of individuals were so;—but those chiefly of the middling and lower ranks. The modern improvements of civil society have taught men, however, that these are the strength of a nation; and that whatever is praiseworthy is far more commonly diffused among them, than among the noble and great. In the present age then it should be no disparagement to the character of the first Christians, that the Church was chiefly composed of persons too low in life, to be of any weight in the despotic systems of government which then prevailed. We have seen one per-

* Indeed, that France had any share in the blessings of the Gospel within this century, can only be inferred from the knowledge we have, that it was introduced into Spain. Whether our own country was evangelized at all in this century, is very doubtful. Nor can we be certain that any ministers as yet had passed into Africa. The assertion, therefore, that the Gospel had spread through the Roman empire, must be understood with a few exceptions, though I think scarcely any more than those which have been mentioned.

son* of uncommon genius and endowments, and two† belonging to the Imperial family, but scarcely any more, either of rank or learning, connected with Christianity. We ought not then to be surprised, that Christians are so little noticed by Tacitus and Josephus: These historians are only intent on sublunary and general politics; they give no attention even to the eternal welfare of individuals.—Nor is this itself a slight exemplification of the genius of that religion, which is destined to form men for the next life, and not for this.

In doctrines the primitive Christians agreed: They all worshipped the one living and true God, who made himself known to them in three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: Each of these they were taught to worship by the very office of baptism performed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost:—And the whole economy of grace so constantly reminded them of their obligations to the Father who chose them to salvation, to the Saviour who died for them, and to the Comforter who supported and sanctified them, and was so closely connected with their experience and practice, that they were perpetually incited to worship the Divine Three in One. They all concurred in feeling conviction of sin, of helplessness, of a state of perdition: in relying on the atoning blood, perfect righteousness, and prevalent intercession of Jesus, as their only hope of heaven. Regeneration by the Holy Ghost was their common privilege, and without his constant influence they owned themselves obnoxious only to sin and vanity. Their community of goods, and their love feasts,‡ though discontinued at length,—probably because found impracticable,—demonstrated their superlative charity and heavenly-mindedness.—Yet a gloomy cloud hung over the conclusion of the first century.

The first impressions made by the effusion of the Spirit are generally the strongest and the most decisively distinct from the spirit of the world. But human

depravity, overborn for a time, arises afresh, particularly in the next generation. Hence the disorders of schism and heresy. Their tendency is to destroy the pure work of God. The first Christians, with the purest charity to the persons of heretics, gave their errors no quarter; but discountenanced them by every reasonable method.

The heretics, on the contrary, endeavoured to unite themselves with Christians. If the same methods be at this day continued;—If the heretic endeavour to promote his false religion by pretended charity, and the Christians stand aloof from him, without dreading the charge of bigotry, each act in character, as their predecessors did. The heretics by weakening men's attachment to Christ, and the schismatics by promoting a worldly and uncharitable spirit, each did considerable mischief; but it was the less, because Christians carefully kept themselves distinct from heretics, and thus set limits to the infection.

It has been of unspeakable detriment to the Christian religion, to conceive that all who profess it, are believers of it, properly speaking. Whereas very many are Christians in name only, never attending to the NATURE of the Gospel at all. Not a few glory in sentiments subversive of its genius and spirit. And there are still more who go not so far in opposition to godliness; yet, by making light of the whole work of Grace on the heart, they are found, on a strict examination, to be as decidedly void of true Christianity. We have seen the first Christians individually converted: and, as human nature needs the same change still, the particular instances of conversion described in the Acts are models for us at this day. National conversions were then unknown; nor has the term any proper meaning. But when whole countries are supposed to become Christians merely because they are so termed; when conversion of heart is kept out of sight; and when no spiritual fruits are expected to appear in practice;—when such ideas grow fashionable, opposite characters are blended with each other; the form of the Gospel stands, and its power is denied.—But let us not anticipate;—These scenes appeared not in the first century.

* Paul. † Clemens and Domitilla.

‡ See Jude's Epistle.

CENTURY II.

CHAPTER I.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANS DURING
THE REIGN OF TRAJAN.

THE master of the Roman world in the beginning of this century was the renowned Trajan. His predecessor Nerva had restored the Christian exiles, and granted a full toleration to the Church. Hence the last of the Apostles had recovered his station at Ephesus, and slept in the Lord, before the short interval of tranquillity was closed by the persecuting spirit of Trajan. Whatever explication may be given or conjectured of the cause of his dislike of Christians, he had a confirmed prejudice against them, and meditated the extinction of the name: nor does it appear that he ever changed his sentiments, or retracted his edicts against them.

There is an account of his persecution in his correspondence with Pliny the governor of Bithynia, a character well known in classical history. The two epistles between the emperor and the governor deserve to be transcribed at length: * they seem to have been written in 106 or 107.†

C. Pliny to Trajan Emperor.

“Health.—It is my usual custom, Sir, to refer all things, of which I harbour any doubts, to you. For who can better direct my judgment in its hesitation, or instruct my understanding in its ignorance? I never had the fortune to be present at any examination of Christians, before I came into this province. I am therefore at a loss, to determine what is the usual object either of inquiry or of punishment, and to what length either of them is to be carried. It has also been with me a question very problematical,—whether any distinction should be made

between the young and the old, the tender and the robust;—whether any room should be given for repentance, or the guilt of Christianity once incurred is not to be expiated by the most unequivocal retraction;—whether the name itself, abstracted from any flagitiousness of conduct, or the crimes connected with the name, be the object of punishment. In the mean time this has been my method, with respect to those who were brought before me as Christians. I asked them, whether they were Christians: if they pleaded guilty, I interrogated them twice afresh, with a menace of capital punishment. In case of obstinate perseverance, I ordered them to be executed. For of this I had no doubt, whatever was the nature of their religion, that a sullen and obstinate inflexibility called for the vengeance of the magistrate. Some were infected with the same madness whom, on account of their privilege of citizenship, I reserved to be sent to Rome, to be referred to your tribunal. In the course of this business, informations pouring in, as is usual when they are encouraged, more cases occurred. An anonymous libel was exhibited, with a catalogue of names of persons, who yet declared, that they were not Christians then, or ever had been; and they repeated after me an invective of the gods and of your image, which, for this purpose, I had ordered to be brought with the images of the deities: They performed sacred rites with wine and frankincense, and execrated Christ,—none of which things I am told a real Christian can ever be compelled to do. On this account I dismissed them. Others named by an informer, first affirmed, and then denied the charge of Christianity; declaring that they had been Christians, but had ceased to be so, some three years ago, others still longer, some even twenty years ago. All of them worshipped your image, and the statues of the gods, and also execrated Christ. And this was the account which they gave of the nature of the religion they once had professed, whether it deserves the name of crime or error,—namely,—that they were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and to repeat among themselves a

* Pliny's Epistles, x. 97, 98.

† Or perhaps in 102 or 105 of the vulgar æra. The reader will do well to keep in mind, that many disagreements in chronology are accounted for by considering that the Birth of our Saviour is placed by some of the best chronologists four years before our vulgar æra.

hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves by an oath, with an obligation of not committing any wickedness:—but on the contrary, of abstaining from thefts, robberies, and adulteries:—also, of not violating their promise, or denying a pledge:—after which it was their custom to separate, and to meet again at a promiscuous harmless meal, from which last practice they however desisted, after the publication of my edict, in which, agreeably to your orders, I forbade any societies of that sort. On which account I judged it the more necessary, to inquire BY TORTURE, from two females, who were said to be deaconesses, what is the real truth. But nothing could I collect, except a depraved and excessive superstition. Deterred therefore any farther investigation, I determined to consult you. For the number of culprits is so great, as to call for serious consultation. Many persons are informed against of every age and of both sexes; and more still will be in the same situation. The contagion of the superstition hath spread not only through cities, but even villages and the country. Not that I think it impossible to check and to correct it. The success of my endeavours hitherto forbids such desponding thoughts: for the temples, once almost desolate, begin to be frequented, and the sacred solemnities, which had long been interrupted, are now attended with assiduity; and the sacrificial victims are now sold every where, which once could scarcely find a purchaser. Whence I conclude, that many might be reclaimed, were the hope of impunity, on repentance, absolutely confirmed."

Trajan to Pliny.

"You have done perfectly right, my dear Pliny, in the inquiry which you have made concerning Christians. For truly no one general rule can be laid down, which will apply itself to all cases. These people must not be sought after:—If they are brought before you and convicted, let them be legally punished, yet with this restriction, that if any one renounce Christianity, and evidence his sincerity by supplicating our gods, however suspected he may be for the past, he shall obtain pardon for the future, on his repentance. But anonymous libels in no case ought to be attended to; for the precedent would be of the worst sort, and perfectly incongruous to the maxims of my government."

The moral character of Pliny is one of

the most amiable in all pagan authority; yet does it appear, that he joined with his master Trajan in his hatred of Christians. In the course of this history, many instances of the same kind will occur. Trajan's character is doubtless much inferior to Pliny's:—it is indeed illustrious by reason of great talents, and great exploits; but by the testimony of Dio, Spartian, and Julian, stained with flagrant vices;* and, as is generally confessed, tarnished by an extravagant ambition. But how is it to be accounted for, that men, who seem enamoured with the beauty of virtue, should turn from it with perfect disgust, and even persecute it with rancour, when it appears in the most genuine colours! Let those who imagine such men as Pliny to be good and virtuous in the proper sense of the words, try to solve this phenomenon on their own principles. On those of the real Gospel, the question is not hard to be determined. Admitting that Pliny might at first be prejudiced against Christians from misrepresentation, how happens it, that he continues so after better information, even when he is convinced that no moral evil is to be found in the Christians of Bithynia, that their meetings are peaceable, and the ends aimed at by them, not only innocent, but laudable? The truth is, virtue in Pliny's writings, and virtue in St. Paul's, mean not the same thing. For humility, the basis of a Christian's virtue, the Pagan has not even a name in his language. The glory of God is the end of virtue in the system of one,—his own glory is the end of virtue in the system of the other. The Christians of Bithynia would be able to give the severe answer "a reason of the hope that was in them with meekness and fear," and then suffering according to the will of God, to commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as to a faithful Creator. These and other precious sentiments in St. Peter's first epistle, which was addressed to some of their fathers, possibly to some of themselves then alive, would now be remembered with peculiar force. A vain-glorious mind like Pliny's, elated with conscious rectitude, would scorn to hear of being saved by the atoning blood of Jesus, would not believe the representation of human nature which the Christians would give him, and would prefer his own reason before the instruction of

* See Lardner's Collections, v. li. c.

the Holy Spirit. Had he been, like Cicero, deeply tinged with the academical philosophy of Greece, like him he would have gloried in sceptical ambiguity, or have inclined to the atheistic views, to which most of the old philosophers were devoted. But as he seems to have imitated him, rather in his passion for oratorical glory, than in his philosophical spirit, he rested in the vulgar creed, highly absurd as it was, and preferred it to the purest dictates of Christianity. The former thwarted not his pride and his lusts: the latter required the humiliation of the one, and the mortification of the other.

In all ages, men even of amiable morals, if destitute of true holiness, are enemies of the Gospel. We here see the true reason of this enmity; which is not capable of being abated by argument: for if that had been the case, Pliny might have seen the iniquity of his proceedings. To call a thing madness and depraved superstition, on the face of which he sees much good and no evil, is the height of unreasonableness. But it is practised by many at this day, who call themselves Christians, and yet are really as averse to the Gospel as Pliny was. Now if we were not willing to be deceived by mere names, but would enter into the spirit of things, it would not be difficult to understand, who they are that resemble Pliny, and who they are that resemble the Christians of Bithynia.

In fact, as there are now, so there were then, persons, who worshipped Christ as their God, who loved one another as brethren united in him: men who derived from his influence support under the severest pressures: who were calumniated by others: who were treated as silly people, on account of that humble and self-denying spirit, by which they kept up communion with their Saviour on earth; and who expected to enjoy him in heaven. It was not the fault of Trajan and Pliny, that such principles were not exterminated from the earth. They hated the men and their religion.

The difference between the persecutors and the sufferers is remarkable with respect to the spirit of politics. The religion of Trajan was governed by this spirit: And his minister thinks it needful to force men to follow the PAGAN religion, whether they believed it to be right or not. Persecuting edicts appear to have been in force against Christians before

the correspondence which we have seen; and Nerva's toleration seems to have ceased. But the Christians showed, that their Master's kingdom was not of this world: They were meek and passive, as Christ himself had been, and as Peter had exhorted them to be. Their number was very large in Bithynia, capable surely of raising a rebellion troublesome to the state; and they would have done so, if their spirits had been as turbulent as those of many pretended Christians.—“But they were subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake.” If there had been the least suspicion of a seditious spirit among them, Pliny must have mentioned it; and their discontinuance of their feasts of charity, after they found them disagreeable to government, is a proof of their loyal and peaceable temper.

In Asia, Arrius Antoninus persecuted them with extreme fury. I am not certain whether his persecution belongs to the reign of Trajan; but as there was an Antoninus very intimate with Pliny, the following story of him, from Tertullian,* may not improperly be introduced here. The whole body of Christians, wearied with constant hardships, presented themselves before his tribunal: He ordered a few of them to execution, and said to the rest, “Miserable people, if you choose death, you may find precipices and halters enow.”—I am willing to believe that the Christians hoped to disarm the persecutor by the sight of their numbers.

One of the most venerable characters at this time was Simeon, bishop of Jerusalem, the successor of St. James. Jerusalem indeed was no more, but the Church still existed in some part of Judea. Some heretics accused him, as a Christian, before Atticus the Roman governor. He was then a hundred and twenty years old, and was scourged many days. The persecutor was astonished at his hardness; but not moved with pity for his sufferings:—at last he ordered him to be crucified.†

It was in the year 107, that Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, was martyred for the faith of Jesus. On the death of Euodius, about the year 70, he had been appointed in his room by the Apostles who were then alive. He governed the Church during this long period: Nor was

A. D. 107.
Martyrdom of
Ignatius.

* Ad. Scapul. C. ult. † Euseb. B. iii. c. 29.

it a small indication of the continued grace of God to that city, to have been blessed so long with such a luminary. We must be content with the short character given of his ministry in the Acts of Ignatius, a piece of martyrology first published in 1647 by Archbishop Usher, from two old manuscripts which have stronger marks of credibility than is usual in such compositions.

"He was a man in all things like to the Apostles. As a good governor, by the habit of prayer and fasting, by the constancy of his doctrine and spiritual labour, he opposed himself to the floods of the adversary: he was like a divine lamp illuminating the hearts of the faithful by his exposition of the Holy Scriptures: and lastly, to preserve his Church, he engaged not freely to expose himself to a bitter death." These Acts were compiled by those who went with him from Antioch, and were eye-witnesses of his sufferings.*

Ambition and the lust of power were not stronger features in the character of Constantine than the desire of martyrdom was in that of Ignatius. Divine Providence however preserved him for the benefit of the Church during the persecution of Domitian, and reserved him to the time of Trajan. This prince being come to Antioch: tenth year of his reign, in the A. D. 107.

Parthian war, Ignatius, fearing for the Christians, and hoping to avert the storm by offering himself to suffer in their stead, came voluntarily into the presence of Trajan. I shall deliver the confession, as it stands in the Acts of Ignatius,—a monument of false glory shrouding itself under superstition and ignorance, on the one hand; and of true glory, supported by the faith and hope of Jesus, on the other.

Being introduced into the emperor's presence, he was thus addressed by Trajan.† What an impious spirit art thou, Ignatius, to transgress our commands, and to invite others into the same folly, to their ruin! Ignatius answered,

Theophorus ought not to be called so; forasmuch as all wicked spirits are departed far from the servants of God. But if you call me impious because I am hostile to evil spirits, I own the charge in that respect. For I dissolve all their snares, through the inward support of Christ the heavenly King.—Traj. Pray, who is Theophorus?—Ign. He who has Christ in his breast.—Traj. And thinkest thou not that gods reside in us also, who fight for us against our enemies?—Ign. You mistake in calling the demons of the nations by the name of gods. For there is only one God, who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, whose kingdom be my portion!—Traj. His kingdom do you say, who was crucified under Pilate?—Ign. His, who crucified my sin with its author; and has put all the fraud and malice of Satan under the feet of those who carry him in their heart.—Traj. Dost thou then carry him who was crucified within thee?—Ign. I do; for it is written; "I dwell in them, and walk in them." Then Trajan pronounced this sentence against him: "Since Ignatius confesses, that he carries within himself him that was crucified, we command, that he be carried bound by soldiers to Great Rome, there to be thrown to the wild beasts, for the entertainment of the people."

The learned Scaliger was puzzled to conceive what could induce Trajan to order his being sent so long a journey for execution. It might seem more natural for him to have directed that he should suffer in the view of his own flock, in order to deter them from Christianity. But Trajan might think the example much more striking and extensive, by using the method which he took. At any rate, Providence undoubtedly displayed, in this way, much more abundantly the honours of the cross, as will appear by what follows.—The doctrine of Union with Christ by faith, now so much ridiculed, appears here in its full glory: And if ever we be called to seem like these, we shall feel the need of it strongly, and be sensible of the impotence of those schemes of mere human invention, which are often substituted in its room. Only Christ within can support the heart in the hour of severe trial: The boasted moral virtue

unequal; but it contains many beautiful passages.

* Wake's Epistles.

† See the Acts of Ignatius, and the Preface of the Life of Ignatius prefixed to a Tragedy written by the Rev. Mr. Garabold, which represents the spirit of primitive Christianity. The tragedy, considered as a composition, is

of proud philosophers is radically defective and unsound.

The scene before us is august; and the state of Christendom at that time is much illustrated by it. The seven epistles of this great man, undoubtedly genuine as they are, and accurately distinguished from all corrupt interpolations,* will come in aid to the Acts of his martyrdom: By them he being dead, yet speaketh; and what the Gospel can do for men, who really believe it, and feel the energy of the Spirit of its divine Author, has not often been more illustriously displayed.

From Antioch he was hurried by his guards to Seleucia: Sailing thence, after great fatigue, he arrived at Smyrna. While the ship remained in port, he was allowed the pleasure of visiting Polycarp, who was bishop of the Christians there. They had been fellow-disciples of St. John; and the holy joy of their interview may be conceived by such persons as know what the love of Christ is, and how it operates in the breasts of those in whom he dwells. Deputies were sent from the various churches of Asia to attend and console him, and to receive some benefit by his spiritual communications. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons, conversed with him: a general convocation seems to have taken place. Four of Ignatius's seven epistles were written from Smyrna, to the Churches of Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, and Rome.

The Church of Ephesus appears, from his epistle to them, still to have maintained its character of evangelical purity. Their zeal indeed had decayed, but was revived: and the rage of persecution was the hot-bed, which reanimated their souls, and made them fruitful again in faith, hope, and charity. The very titles, by which he addresses them, demonstrate what their faith was in common with that of the whole Church at that time; and abundantly show the vanity of those, whose dislike of the peculiar truths of Christianity induces them to suppose, that the ideas of predestination, election, and grace, were purely the systematic inventions of Augustine, and unknown to the primitive Christians. We are certain, that St. Paul's epistles, and that particularly addressed to this Church, are full of the same things.

"Ignatius, who is also called Theo-

phorus, to the worthily happy Church in Ephesus of Asia, blessed in the majesty and fulness of God the Father, predestinated before the world to be perpetually permanent in glory, immovable, united, and elect in the genuine suffering for the truth," by the will of the Father, and of Jesus Christ our God, much joy in Jesus Christ, and in his spotless grace." The character, which he gives of their bishop Onesimus, raises our idea of him to a great degree. He calls him "inexpressible in charity, whom I beseech you to love according to Jesus Christ, and all of you to imitate him. Blessed be his name, who has counted you worthy to enjoy such a bishop." With him he honourably mentions also some presbyters or deacons of their Church, "Through whom," says he, "I have seen you all in love." Onesimus probably was the fugitive slave of Philemon, a growing plant in St. Paul's time.

The unaffected charity and humility of Ignatius deserve our attention. He alone seemed unconscious of his attainments, while the whole Christian world admired him. "I do not," says he, "dictate to you, as if I were a person of any consequence. For though I am bound for the name of Christ, I am not yet perfected in Christ Jesus. For now I begin to be a disciple, and speak to you as my teachers. For I ought to be sustained by you in faith, in admonition, in patience, in long suffering. But since charity will not suffer me to be silent concerning you, for this reason I take upon me to exhort you to run together with me according to the mind of God."

Nothing lies more on his heart in all his epistles, than to recommend the most perfect union of the members of the Church, and to reprobate schisms and dissensions. He represents the Christians as all united to Jesus Christ; all partaking of the same spiritual life. To separate from the Church; and to lose that subordination in which they stood to their pastors, was to tear in pieces the body of Christ, and to expose themselves to the seductions of those who would draw them from the faith and hope of the Gospel. In modern times this language is judged not very consonant to the spirit of liberty, on which we are so apt to felicitate ourselves. And I am persuaded,

* Archbishop Usher has preserved, or rather restored, these Epistles to us.

* Alluding, doubtless, to the Errors of the Doctez.

that the strong manner, in which submission to the Bishop is inculcated, has been the most weighty argument with several persons to encourage themselves in doubts of the authenticity of these pieces. But to doubt the genuineness of these epistles on this account, is to be the slaves of prejudice. Usher, and after him Vossius, have sufficiently distinguished the genuine from the false and the interpolated; and the testimony of antiquity, and the agreement of the epistles, as thus purified, with the quotations of the ancients, render them superior to all exceptions.*

The circumstances in which the Churches were, sufficiently justify the strong expressions of Ignatius. Heretics of various kinds abounded; and their specious artifices were likely to seduce the minds of the weak. What then could be so just a preservative to them, as to stick close to the society of their faithful pastors, the successors of the Apostles? Humility is the guard of real Christian goodness; nothing but the want of it could have tempted them to desire a separation; and in every age the same conduct toward godly pastors is, doubtless, the true wisdom of the Church: The spirit of schism, of ambition, of self-conceit, disguising itself under the specious pretences of liberty and of conscience, has constantly produced the most fatal effects. Ignatius certainly would not have wished the Ephesians to follow unsound and unfaithful pastors: but much more caution in judging, and a much greater degree of submission to ministers confessedly upright, are doubtless requisite, than many persons in our days are willing to admit.—“Let no one,” says Ignatius, “mistake;—if any man is not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. If the prayer of one or two has so much strength, how much more that of the Bishop and of the whole Church: He, who separates from it, is proud, and condemns himself: For it is written, God resisteth the proud. Let us study therefore obedience to the Bishop, that we may be subject to God. And the more silent and gentle any one observes the Bishop to be, the more on

that account should he reverence him. Every one, to whom the Master commits the stewardship, ought to be received as the Master himself.”—“Indeed,” says he, “Onesimus exceedingly commends your godly order:—and that you live according to truth, and that no heresy dwells with you.”—“Some indeed, with much ostentation, make specious but fallacious pretensions, whose works are unworthy of God, whom you ought to avoid as wild beasts. For they are raging dogs, biting in secret, whom you should shun, as being persons very difficult to be cured. One physician there is bodily and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten, God appearing in flesh, in immortal true life, both from Mary and from God,—first suffering,—then impassible”——“I have known some who went from this place,* whom you did not suffer to sow tares among you: you stopped your ears; so that you would not receive their seed, as being stones of the temple of your Father, prepared for the building of God the Father, lifted up into heavenly places by the engine of Jesus Christ, which is his cross, using the Holy Spirit as a cord.”——“Yet pray earnestly for other men without ceasing; for there is hope of conversion in them, that they also may be brought to God. Give them an opportunity to be instructed, at least, by your works.”——“Without Christ, think nothing becoming;—in whom I carry about my bonds,—spiritual jewels;—in which may I be found at the resurrection through your prayer, that my lot may be cast among the Ephesian Christians, who have always harmonized with the Apostles in the power of Jesus Christ!”

“Ye are partakers of the mysteries with Paul the holy, the renowned, the blessed, whose footsteps may I follow!” “Neglect not assemblies for thanksgiving and prayer: For when you assiduously attend on these things, the powers of Satan are demolished, and his pernicious kingdom is dissolved by the unanimity of your faith”——“Remember me, as Jesus Christ also does you. Pray for the Church in Syria, whence I am led bound to Rome,—the meanest of the faithful who are there.”

I know not how the reader may conceive; but to my mind, under all the disadvantages of a style bloated with Asi-

* I shall not enter into so large a field of criticism— whoever has leisure and temper sufficient for the subject, may read with advantage Du Pin's statement of the controversy concerning Ignatius's epistles; and may thence, I believe, learn all that is needful to be known concerning it.

* From Smyrna, I suppose, where the heresy of the Docete was more common.

atic tumour, and still more perhaps of a text very corrupt, the ideas contained in these passages of Ignatius's epistle—and indeed the greatest part of it is little inferior to this specimen,—while they represent partly the faith, discipline, and spirit of the Ephesian Church, and partly the charitable and heavenly mind of the author, give the fairest pattern of real Christianity alive in its root and in its fruits. We see here what Christians once were, and what the doctrines of divine grace are. And that happy union, order, and peace, which flourished so long at Ephesus, untainted with heresy, and ever preserving the simplicity of reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ, calls for our commendation of their obedience to their faithful pastors; the want of a tender conscientiousness in which matter, so soon dissipates the spirit of the Gospel in many modern Churches, and favours very much the growth of a contrary spirit of fickleness, turbulence, and self-importance: which at the same time that it feeds the pride of corrupt nature, reduces large societies of Christians into contemptible little parties at variance with one another, and leaves them an easy prey to the crafty and designing.

The letters of Ignatius add something to the stock of history, as they introduce to our acquaintance the two Asiatic Churches of Magnesia and Tralles, which else had been unknown to us. In truth, that whole fertile region of Asia propria seems to have been more thoroughly evangelized than any other part of the world at that period. From the time of St. Paul's labours at Ephesus, "when all they, which dwelt in Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks,"* to the martyrdom of Ignatius, that is for half a century or upwards,—the truth as it is in Jesus was preserved in its purity in these Churches; The opposers of the Gospel could gain no footing at all in some of them: In others they made no great, or at least, no abiding impressions: In some the fervour of piety was much declined; and in others it still retained a considerable strength. A strong sense of the infinite value of Jesus in his Godhead, his priesthood, and his blood, prevailed in this region: Faith and love were fed by the view of the Saviour; and patience in suffering for his name was one of their most common virtues.

Damas, the Bishop of Magnesia, was a young person, whom Ignatius calls "worthy of God." Eminent grace in persons of tender years was sometimes in the primitive Church distinguished by their advancement to the Episcopacy. In his letter to the Magnesians, he warns them not to despise his youth, but to imitate the holy Presbyters, who gave place to him, but not to him so properly, as to the Father of Jesus Christ.—"Some persons, indeed, call a man a Bishop, but do every thing independently of him. Such seem to me to have lost a good conscience, because their assemblies are not regulated with steadfastness and Christian order." He mentions also with honour Bassus and Apollonius as Presbyters, and Sotio the deacon, "whose happiness," says he, "may I partake of! because he is subject to the Bishop, as to the grace of God, and to the Presbytery, as to the law of Jesus Christ."

Here, as elsewhere, he evidently points out three distinct ranks in the primitive Church,—the Bishop, the Presbyters, and the Deacons. A blind and implicit submission to a hierarchy, however corrupt, worthless and ignorant, was then unknown. But a just and regular subordination, according to the ranks of men in the Church was much attended to; and nothing like it, humanly speaking, so much encourages and enables godly pastors to discharge their office with zeal and alacrity. Nor is it difficult to conceive, what was the most customary mode of church-government in those times. In vain, I think, will almost any modern church whatever set up a claim to exact resemblance. Usher's model of reduced Episcopacy seems to come the nearest to the plan of the primitive Churches. At first, indeed, or for some time, church governors were only of two ranks, Presbyters and Deacons: At least, this appears to have been the case in particular instances; as at Philippi* and at Ephesus;† and the term Bishop was confounded with that of Presbyter. The Church of Corinth continued long in this state, so far as one may judge by Clement's epistle; and thence we may in part account for the continuance of their contentious spirit. As these Churches grew numerous, they could never be all assembled in one place: the Presbyters must have ministered to different congrega-

* Acts xix. 10.

* Ch. i. Philipp.

† Acts xx. 17.

tions, though the Church continued one. Toward the end of the first century, all the churches followed the model of the mother-church of Jerusalem, where one of the Apostles was the first Bishop. A settled presidency obtained, and the name of Angel was first given to the supreme ruler, though that of Bishop soon succeeded. That this was the case in the seven churches of Asia, is certain. The address of the charges to him in the book of the Revelation demonstrates his superiority. The Deacon, it is well known, was chosen to administer in sacred employments of an inferior kind. These three ranks appear to have been general through the Christian world in the former part of this century.

It has been an error common to all parties, to treat these lesser matters, as if they were *JURE DIVINO*, or like the laws of the Medes and Persians, unalterable. Could it, however, conveniently be done, it may perhaps be true that a reduced Episcopacy, in which the dioceses are of small extent, as those in the primitive Church undoubtedly were, and in which the President, residing in the metropolis, exercises a superintendency over ten or twelve Presbyters of the same city and neighbourhood, would bid the fairest to promote order, peace, and harmony.

But the Christian world has been more anxious to support different modes of government, than to behave as Christians ought to do in each of them. A subject of much greater importance is suggested to us by a passage in the epistle to the Magnesians, "As there are two coins, one of God, the other of the world, and each of them is impressed with its own character: the unbelievers are of this world, the believers in love have the character of God the Father through Jesus, into whose sufferings if we are unwilling to die, his life is not in us."—Thus does Ignatius call our attention to the grand distinction of men into two sorts before God; of which whoever has felt the force, will be little solicitous concerning other distinctions.

Let us hear Ignatius's testimony to the Deity of Christ, and to justification by his grace through faith, and to the constant influences of the Holy Spirit: And we may observe at the same time, how the Jewish heaven of self-righteousness had not ceased, to attempt at least, to darken and to corrupt these essentials of the Gospel. The religion of the Jews,

indeed, must have been at this time in a very low state; yet the same Pharisaism is so congenial to the human mind, that ministers in all ages will see occasion to warn their people against it, as Ignatius did.

"Be not deceived with heterodox opinions, nor old unprofitable fables. For if we still live according to Judaism, we confess that we have not received grace. For the Divine Prophets lived according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For this they were persecuted, being inspired by his grace, to assure the disobedient, that there is one God, who manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is His eternal Word.—If then they have indeed cast off their old principles, and are come to a new hope in Christ, let them no longer observe the Jewish Sabbath, but live according to the resurrection of the Lord* in whose resurrection from the dead our resurrection also is ensured, by him and by his death, which some deny; through whom and by whom we have received the mystery of believing; and on account of this we endure, that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher. How can we live without him, whose disciples even the prophets were? for in spirit they expected him as their teacher. Let us not then be insensible of his loving-kindness: For if he measured to us according to what we have done, we should be ruined. Therefore being his disciples, let us learn to live according to Christianity: he who follows any other name than this, is not of God. Lay aside then the old bitter heaven, and be transformed into a new heaven, which is Jesus Christ—for Christianity is not converted to Judaism, but Judaism to Christianity, that every tongue confessing God might be gathered together. These things I warn you, my beloved, not because I have known some of you thus ill-disposed; but, as the least of you, I am willing to admonish you, that ye fall not into the snares of vain-glory, but that ye may be well assured of that nativity, suffering, and resurrection, during the government of Pontius Pilate, of which literally and really Jesus Christ was the subject, who is our hope, from which may none of you be turned aside!—I know that ye are not puffed up, for ye have Jesus Christ in yourselves; and

* *Exegetes* *Inter*—A manifest intimation to them to observe the Lord's day.

the more I praise you, the more I know that ye will be lowly-minded." Beautiful view of their genuine humility!—He proceeds thus :—"Study then to be confirmed in the doctrines of the Lord and of the Apostles, that in all things which ye do, ye may have good success in flesh and spirit, in faith and love, in the Son, and the Father and the Spirit.—Knowing that ye are full of God, I have briefly exhorted you. Remember me in your prayers, that I may come to God, and to the Church in Syria, of which I am unworthy to be called a member. For I need your united prayer in God, and your charity, that the Church in Syria may be thought worthy to partake of the dew of heavenly grace through your Church. The Ephesians at Smyrna, whence I write, together with Polycarp, Bishop of the Smyrneans and the rest of the Churches in the honour of Jesus Christ, salute you : They live as in the presence of the glory of God, as ye do also, who have refreshed me in all things : Continue strong in the concord of God : Possess a spirit of union in Jesus Christ."

From Smyrna he wrote also to the Church of Tralles, the Bishop of which was Polybius, "who so rejoiced with me," says he, "that I beheld all your multitude in him. Receiving therefore your divine benevolence through him, I seemed actually to find you, as I have known you to be, followers of God. For since ye are subject to the Bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to live, not after man, but after Jesus Christ : who died for us, that believing in his death ye might escape death."

In what follows we have an intimation of the weak and infant state of this Church ; which though sound, had probably not been so long planted as the rest. And the martyr seems to express some consciousness of superior attainments and gifts, though nevertheless restrained by deep humility.

"I have a strong savour of God ; but I take a just measure of myself, lest I perish by boasting. For now I must more abundantly fear, and not attend to those who would inflate me with pride—I love indeed to suffer, but do not know whether I am worthy. I need gentleness of spirit, by which the prince of this world is subdued. Cannot I write to you of heavenly things!—Ye are infants ; and I fear lest I should hurt you :—I fear lest, through incapacity of receiving stronger meat, ye should be injured in your spiritual growth." He goes on to guard them

against schisms and heresies, to remind them of the foundation of the Gospel, viz : Christ and him crucified ; and, in his usual manner, to recommend obedience to their pastors :—"He modestly thus concludes,—"As yet I am not out of the reach of danger ; but the Father is faithful in Jesus Christ to fulfil my petition and yours, in whom may we be found blameless!"

The subject of his letter to the Roman Christians was, to intreat them not to use any methods for his deliverance. He had the prize of martyrdom before him, and he was unwilling to be robbed of it. He speaks with uncommon pathos :

"I fear your charity, lest it should injure me. It will be easy for you to do what you wish : But, it will be difficult for me to glorify God, if I should be spared through your entreaties.—If you be silent in my behalf, I shall be made partaker of God ; but if you love to retain me in the flesh, I shall again have my course to run. I write to the Churches, and signify to them all, that I die willingly for God, unless you prevent me : I beseech you, that you show not an unreasonable love toward me : Suffer me to be the food of beasts, by which means I shall attain to the kingdom of God.—Rather encourage the wild beasts, that they may become my sepulchre ; that nothing of my body may be left ; that I may give no trouble to any one, when I fall asleep. From Syria to Rome, I fight with wild beasts—in human form,—by land and sea, by night and day, chained to ten leopards, who are made even worse by kind treatment. By their injuries I learn the more to be a disciple of Jesus,—yet am I not hereby justified. May I enjoy the real wild beasts, which are prepared for me : May they exercise all their fierceness upon me ! I will encourage them, that they may assuredly devour me, and not use me as some, whom they have feared to touch. But if they will not do it willingly, I will provoke them to it :—Pardon me,—I know what is good for me. Now I begin to be a disciple : nor shall any thing, of things visible and invisible, move me :—Let fire and the cross, let the companies of wild beasts, let breaking of bones and tearing of limbs, let the grinding of the whole body, and all the malice of the Devil come upon me ; be it so, only may I enjoy Jesus Christ ! All the ends of the world, and the kingdoms of it will profit me

nothing: It is better for me to die for Jesus Christ, than to reign over the ends of the earth: Him I seek who died for us: Him I desire who rose again for us: He is my gain laid up for me: Suffer me to imitate the Passion of my God.—If any of you have Him within you, let him conceive what I feel, and let him sympathize with me, and know what a comfort I have. The prince of this world wishes to corrupt my purpose toward God: Let none of you present assist him: My worldly affections are crucified: the fire of God's love burns within me, and cannot be extinguished: It lives: it speaks, and says, 'Come to the Father.' I have no delight in the bread that perisheth, nor in the pleasures of this life: I long for the bread of God; the flesh of Jesus Christ of the seed of David: and I desire to drink his blood—incorruptible love."

Certainly no words can express in a stronger manner the intenseness of spiritual desire: and one is disposed to look down with contempt and pity on the magnanimity of secular heroes and patriots, as compared with it. Yet I have some doubt, whether all this flame, strong and sincere as it unquestionably was, had not something mixed with it by no means of so pure a kind. For I would not carry the reader's admiration or my own beyond the limits of human imbecility.—Ought not the Roman Christians to have endeavoured to save Ignatius's life by all honest means?—Has any man a right to hinder others from attempting to save the life of the innocent?—or, Will his entreaties give them a right to be as indifferent for his preservation as he himself is?—Ought not every man, however prepared for death, and preferring it, if God please, to use all possible methods, consistent with a good conscience, to preserve his life?

I cannot answer these queries to the advantage of Ignatius's determination.—Was not his desire of martyrdom excessive? If he was wrong, it was doubtless a mistake of judgment. I fear the example of Ignatius did harm in this respect in the Church. Martyrdom was, we know, made too much of in the third century—as hard is it to be kept from all extremes:—ours are generally of the opposite kind.

These reflections are suggested, in part by the example of St. Paul. He, indeed, "would go to Jerusalem," though he knew he should be bound. But the certainty of death was not before his

eyes, and therefore his resolution, in this case, is not similar to that of Ignatius. As for the rest, he took no pains to dissuade others from saving his life: He took pains to save it himself: He blames his friends at Rome for deserting him: And that eagerness for martyrdom which Ignatius expresses, I see neither in Paul nor in any of the Apostles. They rather refer themselves calmly to the will of God in things which concern themselves. On the whole, there appears in Ignatius, the same zeal for God and love to Jesus Christ, and the same holy contempt of earthly things, which was so eminent in the Apostles; but, I suspect, not an equal degree of calm resignation to the Divine Will.

The time which he was allowed to spend at Smyrna, in company with his beloved Polycarp and other friends, must have been highly agreeable to him. But his keepers were impatient of their long stay: the reasons were, most probably of a maritime nature. The season, however, for the public spectacles at Rome was advancing, and, perhaps, they were afraid of not arriving in time. They now set sail for Troas, where, at his arrival, he was refreshed with the news of the persecution ceasing in the Church of Antioch. He had been attended hither by Burrhus, the deacon of Polycarp; and him he despatched with an epistle to the Philadelphians, by way of return for the visit which their Bishop had paid him at Troas. For here also several Churches sent their messengers to visit and to salute him: and Providence so far restrained the inhumanity of his guards, that he was allowed to have intercourse with them.—He wrote three epistles more at this place.

The Philadelphians, from his account, were still favoured with the same spirit of grace, by which they had been already so honourably distinguished among the seven churches of Asia. He recommends, as usual, unity, concord, obedience:—not that he had found any thing amiss in them, in these respects.

One may form some idea of the manner in which these primitive Christians enjoyed the grace of God, and admired and loved it, as it appeared in one another, by his way of speaking of the Philadelphian Bishop, whose name is not given to us, "whom," says he, "I know to have obtained the ministry, not by any selfish or worldly means or motives, but

for the common good of saints; nor through vain glory; but from the love of God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am perfectly charmed with his meekness: When silent, he exhibits more power than vain speakers."

He recommends to them to preserve a unity in the administration of the Lord's Supper: "For there is one body of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup in the unity of his blood; one altar, as also one Bishop, with the Presbytery and the Deacons my fellow servants.—Whatever ye do, do all according to the will of God."

The firmness of the Christian faith, and his zeal against the spirit of self-righteousness, are observable in the following passage:—"If any interpret Judaism to you, hear him not. For it is better to hear the Gospel from a circumcised person, than Judaism from an uncircumcised one. But if both speak not of Jesus Christ, they are to me pillars and sepulchres of the dead, on which are written only the names of men.—The objects dear to me are Jesus Christ, his cross, his death, his resurrection, and the faith which is in him; by which I desire, through your prayer, to be justified." He begs them to send a Deacon to Antioch, to congratulate his people on the cessation of persecution. Toward the conclusion he speaks of Philo, the Deacon from Cilicia, who ministered to him, together with Agathopus, a choice saint, who, renouncing the world, had followed him from Syria.

He wrote also from Treas to the Smyrnians, and his commendations of them are consonant to the character they bear in the book of the Revelation. They had weathered the storm of persecution, which was there predicted, and had probably enjoyed the ministry of Polycarp from St. John's time. The most striking thing in this epistle, is the zeal with which he warns them against the Doctræ. In his view the evil of their heresy consisted in taking away the atoning blood of Christ, and the hope of a blessed resurrection:—Let modern Divines hear him, and be instructed. "I glorify Jesus Christ our God, who hath given you wisdom. For I understand, that ye are perfect in the immovable faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; who REALLY WAS of the seed of David according to the flesh, and born of a virgin REALLY; who REALLY suffered under Pontius Pilate.—For these things he suffered for us, that we

might be saved. And he TRULY suffered: as also he TRULY raised up himself: not as some infidels say that he SEEMED to suffer.—I forewarn you of those beasts, who are in the shape of men; whom you ought not only not to receive, but if possible not even to meet with. Only you ought to pray for them—if they may be converted,—which is a difficult case.—But Jesus Christ, our true life, has power to save to the uttermost."—An humble and thankful sense of the unspeakable value of Christ, leads naturally to this charity, and the want of it leaves men always, under the appearance of candour, to a cruel insensibility of heart and an undistinguished scepticism. It seems, that these heretics, with the usual artifices of such persons, laboured to work themselves into the good graces of Ignatius. He sees through their designs, and says,—“for what does it profit me, if any man commend me, and yet blaspheme my Lord, denying him to have come in the flesh?—They separate from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they confess not the Eucharist to be the body of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who suffered for our sins.—They who contradict the gift of God, die in their reasonings.”—Union with the Bishop he strenuously insists on. "It is not lawful without the Bishop, to baptise, or to make a love feast."

We see the practice of true Christians in those times. They carefully separated themselves from heretics: they beheld their views with horror: they stuck close to Christ.—His Godhead, Manhood, Atonement, Priesthood, were inestimably precious in their eyes. They could not allow those to be Christians at all, who denied the fundamentals: In fine, they preserved order and close connexion with their pastors: they did nothing in religion without them.—These were the means of protecting truth among them: and the long course of evangelical prosperity in these Churches, under God, may be ascribed to the use of these means.

One letter only remains to be mentioned,—that to Polycarp.—It contains a just picture of pastoral integrity, wisdom, and charity: The whole of it deserves to be studied by all ministers. The more holy any Pastor is, the more will he be sensible of the need of divine wisdom and strength.—The disadvantages in which a poor sinful worm is involved, who has to contend against the united powers of the

world and the devil, against the corrupt workings of his own nature, the open opposition of the profane, and the faults of God's own people, cannot even be conceived by a more secular Clergy, intent only on ease and preferment, or, at best, on literary indulgences and external decorum: as little will they be conceived by those ambitious and turbulent teachers, who are so swallowed up in political dreams, as to forget that Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

"I exhort thee, by the grace with which thou art clothed, to apply thyself to thy course of duty; and to admonish all, that they may all be saved. Do justice to thy station in all diligence, both temporal and spiritual: Be studious of that best of all blessings, unity: Bear with all, as also the Lord doth with thee: Bear with all in charity, as indeed thou also dost. Find time for prayer without ceasing: Ask for more understanding than thou hast at present. Watch,—and possess a spirit ever attentive: Speak to each separately, as A mighty God shall enable thee to do: Bear with the diseases of all, as a perfect constant.—The more labour, the more reward.—If thou love only the obedient disciples, thou evidencest no grace: Rather bring into orderly subjection the turbulent through meekness: Every wound is not cured by the same method of application: Watch as a divine wrestler: Thy theme is immortality and eternal life.—Let not those who seem experienced Christians, and are yet unsound in the faith, stagger thee: Stand firm as an anvil continually struck. It is the character of a great wrestler to be mangled,—and yet to conquer:—Be more studious than thou art.—Consider the times; and expect Him who is above all time, who is unconnected with time, the invisible one made visible for us,—the impossible, but possible for us; who bore all sorts of sufferings for us.—Let not widows be neglected: Next to the Lord, do thou take care of them: Let nothing be done without thy cognizance: Do thou nothing without the mind of God.—Let assemblies be more frequently held: Seek out all by name: Dispose not slaves of either sex; yet let them not be pulled up, but serve more faithfully to the glory of God, that they may obtain a better liberty from God: Let them not desire to be set at liberty at the charge of the Church, lest they be found slaves of lust. If any one revails in chastity for the honour of the

Lord, let them do so without boasting. If they boast, they are lost: and if the man set himself up above the Bishop, he is lost. It behoves the married to enter into that connection with the consent of the Bishop, that the marriage may be after the will of God, and not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

From Troas, Ignatius, being brought to Neopolis, passed by Philippi through Macedonia, and that part of Epirus, which is next to Epidamnus. Having found a ship in one of the sea-ports, his conductors sailed over the Adriatic; and thence, entering into the Tuscan sea, and passing by several islands and cities, at length they came in view of Puteoli, which being shown to him, he hastened to go forth, desirous to tread in the steps of the Apostle Paul; but a violent wind arising would not permit him to accomplish this design. His attendants, the relations of the martyrdom, say, that the wind then became favourable for one day and night;—and that they were hurried on contrary to their wishes: THEY sorrowed at the thought of being separated from him: but he rejoiced in the prospect of soon leaving the world and departing to his Lord, whom he loved:—They sailed into the Roman port Ostia; and when the impure sports were at an end, the soldiers began to be offended with his slowness; but the Bishop joyfully complied with their hastiness. Ostia was some miles from Rome; and he was met by the Roman Christians, who intimated their strong desire for his preservation. Some of them probably had influence with the great; and they were willing to try it: Ignatius, however, was inflexible. He was brought to Rome, and presented to the prefect of the city.

When he was led to execution, he was attended by a number of the brethren, and was allowed to join in prayer with them. And he prayed to the Son of God^e in behalf of the Churches,—that he would put a stop to the persecution, and continue the love of the brethren toward each other. He was then led into the amphitheatre, and speedily thrown to the wild beasts. He had here also his wish: The beasts were his grave: A few bones only were left, which

^e I use the expression of the Narrative: let the reader make the obvious inference for himself.

the Deacons gathered, carefully preserved, and afterwards buried at Antioch.

The writers thus conclude: "We have made known to you both the day and the time of his martyrdom,—that being assembled together according to that time, we may jointly commemorate the magnanimous martyr of Christ, who trode under foot the devil, and completed the course which he had devoutly wished in Christ Jesus our Lord, by whom and with whom all glory and power be to the Father with the blessed Spirit for ever. Amen."

Usher has preserved, or rather restored to us also an epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians. It breathes the same spirit as those of his fellow-disciple, but has less pathos and vigour of sentiment. Citations from it will be needless.—He begs the Philippians to communicate to him what they knew of Ignatius, whom they had seen at Philippi, after his departure from Smyrna. We hence see how the Churches then formed one large fraternity, abstracted from partial views of supporting little factions and interests. He exhorts them to obey the word of righteousness, and to exercise all patience, which they had seen exemplified in Ignatius, and in others among themselves, and in Paul himself, and the rest of the Apostles: for these loved not this present world, but him, who died and was raised again by God for us. By his account it appears, that the Philippians still retained the Christian spirit.—One of the Presbyters, Valens, together with his wife, had sinned through covetousness.—Would to God such spots in the pastoral character were as singular in our times! Polycarp beautifully expresses his charitable concern for them, and exhorts them, in affectionate sympathy, to endeavour to restore their spiritual health.

These facts and observations throw some light on the persecution of Trajan, on the spirit of Christians so far as it can be collected at that time, on the martyrdom of Ignatius, and on the signal glory which God was pleased to diffuse around it among the Churches.

CHAPTER II.

THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANS DURING
THE REIGNS OF ADRIAN AND ANTONINUS PIUS.

TRAJAN died in the year 117. The lat-

ter part of his reign had been employed in his great military expedition into the East, whence he lived not to return. His exploits and triumphs fall not within my province:—I have no concern with him except in that line, in which to a Christian he must appear to the greatest disadvantage; and out of which, it **was heartily to be wished, that he had ever given any evidence of a desire to remove.** His successor, Adrian, appears not to have issued any persecuting edicts. But the iniquity of his predecessor survived; and Adrian's silent acquiescence for a time, gave it sufficient scope to exert itself in acts of barbarity.*

In the mean time the Gospel spread more and more. A number of apostolic persons demonstrated by their conduct, that the Spirit which had influenced the Apostles, rested upon them. Filled with divine charity, they distributed their substance to the poor, and travelled into regions, which, as yet, had not heard the sound of the Gospel; and having planted the faith, they ordained pastors, committed to them the culture of the new ground, and then passed into other countries. Hence numbers, through grace, embraced the doctrine of salvation, at the first hearing, with much alacrity.† It is natural to admire here the power of the Holy Spirit of God in the production of so pure and charitable a temper; to contrast it with the illiberal selfishness too prevalent even among the best in our days; and to regret how little is done for the propagation of the Gospel through the world, by nations whose aids of commerce and navigation are so much superior to those enjoyed by the ancients.—One advantage those Christians possessed indeed, which we have not: They were all one body, one Church, of one name, and cordially loved one another as brethren: The attention to fundamentals, to real Christianity, was not dissipated by schismatic peculiarities, nor was the body of Christ rent in pieces by factions. There were indeed many heresies; but real Christians admitted them not into their communities: the line of distinction was drawn with sufficient precision; and a dislike of the person or offices of Christ, and of the real spirit of holiness, discrimi-

Death of
Trajan.
A. D. 117.

* The persecution of the 2d year of Adrian, is commonly called the Fourth Persecution of the Christians.

† Euseb. B. iii. c. 33.

nated the heretics; and separation from them, while it was undoubtedly the best mark of charity to their souls, tended to preserve their faith and love of true Christians in genuine purity.

Among these holy men Quadratus was much distinguished. He succeeded Pub-

Character
of Quad-
ratus.

lius in the bishopric of Athens, who had suffered martyrdom either in this or in the foregoing reign. He found the flock in a dispersed and confused state: * Their public assemblies were deserted: their zeal was grown cold and languid: their lives and manners were corrupted; and they seemed likely to apostatize from Christianity. Quadratus laboured to recover them with much zeal and with equal success: † Order and discipline were restored, and with them the holy flame of godliness. One of the strongest testimonies of these things, is the account which the famous Origen, in the second book of his treatise against Celsus, gives of the Athenian Church. While this great man is demonstrating the admirable efficacy of Christian faith on the minds of men, he exemplifies his positions by this very Church of Athens, on account of its good order, constancy, meekness, and quietness.—He represents it as infinitely superior, in these respects, to the common political assembly in that city, which was factitious and tumultuary. He affirms that it was evident, that the worst parts of the Church were better than the best of their popular assemblies. This is a very pleasing testimony to the growth of Christianity, since the time that a handful of seed was sown there by St. Paul: and let the testimony of so penetrating and sagacious an observer as Origen be considered, as one of the many proofs that might be given of the happy effect which real Christianity has on human society. To a mind not intoxicated with vain ideas of secular glory, the Christian part of Athens must appear infinitely more happy and more respectable, than that commonwealth ever had been in the meridian of its glory.—But we hope in future pages to give much stronger proofs of the advantages derived to society from the Gospel.

In the sixth year of his reign, Adrian came to Athens, and was initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries. This prince was remarkably fond of pagan institutions;

and by this very circumstance demonstrated a spirit extremely foreign to Christianity. The persecutors were proceeding with sanguinary vigour, when Quadratus, at length, presented an apology to the emperor, in which he defended the Gospel from the calumnies of its enemies; and in which he particularly took notice of our Saviour's miracles, his curing of diseases, and raising of the dead.—some instances of which, he says, namely, of persons raised from the dead, were alive in his time.

Aristides, a Christian writer at that time in Athens, addressed himself also to Adrian in an apology on the same subject. The good sense of the emperor at length was roused to do justice to his innocent subjects. The apologies of the two writers may be reasonably supposed to have had some effect on his mind. Yet a letter from Serenius Granius, proconsul of Asia, may be conceived to have moved him still more. He wrote to the emperor, "that it seemed to him unreasonable, that the Christians should be put to death, merely to gratify the clamours of the people, without trial, and without any crime proved against them." This seems the first instance of any Roman governor daring publicly to suggest ideas contradictory to Trajan's iniquitous maxims, which inflicted death on Christians as such, abstracted from any moral guilt. And it seems to me a sufficient proof, that the severe sufferings of Christians at this period, which appear to have been very remarkable in Asia, were more owing to the active and sanguinary spirit of persecution itself,—which, from Trajan's example, was become very fashionable,—than to any explicit regard to his edicts. We have Adrian's rescript addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the successor of Granius, whose government seems to have been near to its conclusion when he wrote to the emperor.

To Minucius Fundanus.

"I have received a letter written to me by the very illustrious Serenius Granius, whom you have succeeded.—To me then the affair seems by no means fit to be slightly passed over, that men may not be disturbed without cause, and that synagogues may not be encouraged in their seditious practices. If the people of the province will appear publicly, and make open charges against the Christians, so as to give them an opportunity of answer-

* Euseb. H. iv. c. 22.

† Cave's Life of Quadratus.

ing for themselves, let them proceed in that manner only, and not by rude demands and mere clamours. For it is much more proper, if any person will accuse them, that you should take cognizance of these matters. If any then accuse, and show that they actually break the laws, do you determine according to the nature of the crime. But, by Hercules,* if the charge be a mere calumny, do you estimate the enormity of such calumny, and punish it as it deserves."

Notwithstanding the obscurity, which I find Dr. Jortin and Dr. Lardner suppose to be in this rescript, I cannot but think it clearly shows that it was the intention of the emperor to prevent Christians from being punished as such. The only reason for hesitation, which I can see, is the inconsistency of it with Trajan's rescript. But it does not appear that Adrian intended the conduct of his predecessor to be the model of his own: and we shall see, in the next reign, still clearer proofs of the equity of Adrian's views. It is but justice due to this emperor, to free his character from the charge of persecution; and Christians of that or of any age could not object to the propriety of being punished equally with other men, if they violated the laws of the state. But it is the glory of the times we are now reviewing, that no men were more innocent, peaceable, and well-disposed citizens than the Christians. Yet the enmity of men's minds against real godliness,—so natural in all ages,—laid them under extreme disadvantages unknown to others, in vindicating themselves from unjust aspersions; and this forms, indeed, one of the most painful crosses which good men must endure in this life. For example, many heretics, who wore the name of Christians, were guilty of the most detestable enormities; these were indiscriminately charged by the Pagans on Christians in general.—This circumstance, in addition to other still more important reasons, rendered them careful in preserving the line of separation distinct; and, by the excellency of their doctrine, and the purity of their lives, they were enabled gradually to overcome all uncandid insinuations.

There is extant also a letter of Adrian,† in which he speaks of Christian bishops in as respectable a manner as of the priests

of Serapis; and of Christians in general as very numerous at Alexandria. Since St. Mark's time, therefore, it is evident, though we have scarcely any particular accounts, that the Gospel must have flourished abundantly in Egypt.

But the same equitable rule of government, which forbade Adrian to punish the innocent Christians, led him to be very severe against the guilty Jews: for now appeared Barchochebas, who pretended to be the star prophesied of by Balaam.—This miserable people, who had rejected the true Christ, received the impostor with horrid arms; and were by him led into open crimes; and amongst the rest into a cruel treatment of the Christians.* The issue of the rebellion was the entire exclusion of the Jews from the city and territory of Jerusalem. Another city was erected in its stead, and called, after the emperor's name, Ælia. This leads us to consider how the state of the mother-church of Jerusalem was affected by this great revolution. The Christian Jews, previous to the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, as it has been observed, had retired to Pella, a little town beyond Jordan, inhabited by Gentiles: The unexpected retreat of Cestius had given them this opportunity of effecting their escape. How long they continued here, is uncertain. They must, however, have returned before Adrian's time, who, coming to Jerusalem 47 years after the devastation, found there a few houses and a little Church of Christians built on mount Sion. Here the Church of Jerusalem kept their solemn assemblies, and seemed to have acquired a splendid accession by the conversion of Aquila, the emperor's kinsman, whom he made governor and overseer of the new city. But as he continued to pursue his magic and astrological studies he was excluded from the Church.—A strong proof that the mother-church still retained a measure of its pristine purity and discipline!—Corrupt churches are glad to retain persons of eminence in their communion, however void of the spirit of the Gospel.—Aquila, incensed, apostatized to Judaism, and translated the Old Testament into Greek.†

Adrian comes to Jerusalem: A. D. 127.

* This is an oath, demonstrating only the earnestness of the writer in his declarations, according to the usual profaneness of men.

† Vopiscus, b. ii. 67.

* Justin Martyr, in his first, commonly called second Apology, observes that Barchochebas cruelly tortured such Christians as refused to deny and blaspheme Jesus Christ.

† Cave's Life of Simcon.

Eusebius, b. iv. c. 5. gives us a list of the bishops who successively presided in Jerusalem. The first was the Apostle James, the second Simon; both whose histories have been recorded. He mentions thirteen more: but we have no account of their characters or actions.—During all this time something judicial seems to have continued in their practice; though Jewish ideas would naturally decay by degrees. The revolution under Adrian, at length put a total end to the Jewish Church, by the extirpation and banishment of this people.—To such outward changes is the Church of Christ subject; a new Church, however, arose in Asia, of the Gentiles, whose bishop was named Mark.

Adrian, after a reign of twenty-one years, was succeeded by Antoninus Pius, who appears to have been, at least in his own personal character and intentions, always guiltless of Christian blood. It was now very difficult for the enemies of Christ to support their persecuting spirit, with any tolerably specious pretensions: The accusations of heretics, when ignorance and malice will ever confound with real Christians, furnished them with some: Probably these were much exaggerated: but, whatever they were, the whole Christian name was accused of them. They were charged with incest, and the devouring of infants; and thus a handle was afforded for the barbarous treatment of the best of mankind; till time detected the slanders, and men became at length ashamed of affecting to believe what was in its own nature improbable, and was supported by no evidence. It pleased God at this time to endow some Christians with the power of defending his truth by the manly arms

of rational argumentation.—Justin Martyr presented his first Apology to the emperor A. D. 159, Antoninus Pius, about the third year of his reign, A. D.

160. He was of that class of men, who, in those days, were usually called philosophers. His conversion to Christianity, his views and spirit, his labours and sufferings, will deserve to be considered in a distinct chapter. Suffice it here to say, that the information and arguments, which his first Apology contained, were not in vain. Antoninus was a man of sense and humanity. Open to conviction, uncorrupted by the vain and chimerical philosophy of the times, he

was desirous of doing justice to all mankind. Asia propria was still the scene of vital Christianity and of cruel persecution.—Thence the Christians applied to Antoninus; and complained of the many injuries which they sustained from the people of the country.—Earthquakes, it seems, had lately happened; and the Pagans were much terrified, and ascribed them to the vengeance of Heaven against the Christians. We have, both in Eusebius* and at the end of Justin's first Apology, the edict sent to the common council of Asia; every line of which deserves attention.

The Emperor, to the Common Council of Asia.

"I am quite of opinion, that the gods will take care to discover such persons. For it much more concerns them to punish those who refuse to worship them, than you, if they be able. But you harass and vex the Christians, and accuse them of Atheism and other crimes, which you can by no means prove. To them it appears an advantage to die for their religion, and they gain their point, while they throw away their lives, rather than comply with your injunctions. As to the earthquakes which have happened in past times, or lately, is it not proper to remind you of your own despondency, when they happened;—and to desire you to compare your spirit with theirs, and to observe how serenely they confide in God? In such seasons you seem to be ignorant of the gods, and to neglect their worship: You live in the practical ignorance of the supreme God himself, and you harass and persecute to death those who do worship him. Concerning those same men, some others of the provincial governors wrote to our divine father Adrian, to whom he returned answer,—That they should not be molested, unless they appeared to attempt something against the Roman government. Many also have signified to me concerning these men, to whom I have returned an answer agreeable to the maxims of my father. But if any person will still persist in accusing the Christians merely as such,—Let the accused be acquitted, though he appear to be a Christian;—and let the accuser be punished."—Set up at Ephesus in the common assembly of Asia.

* B. iv. 11, 12, 13.

Eusebius informs us, that this was no empty edict, but was really put in execution. Nor did this emperor content himself with one edict. He wrote to the same purport to the Larissæans, the Thessalonians, the Athenians, and all the Greeks.

As this prince reigned 23 years, such vigorous measures must, after some time at least, have had their effect. And we may fairly conclude that during a great part of this reign the Christians were permitted to worship God in peace. A few remarks on the conduct of this prince, and on the facts which appear on the face of his edict, may be judged not improper.

1. There are, it seems, some instances of princes, even in ancient history, not unacquainted with the just principles of religious liberty, which are now more generally understood. The most intelligent legislator, in any age, never understood the natural rights of conscience better than Antoninus Pius. He saw that Christians, as such, ought not to be punished. His subjects, bigoted and barbarous, were far from thinking so; and it was not till after repeated edicts and menaces, that he forced them to cease from persecution.

2. In the conduct of this emperor, one may observe how far human nature can advance in moral virtue by its natural resources, while it remains destitute of the grace of God and the superior principle of holiness. If the advocates of natural morality, considered as abstracted from Christianity, were to fix on a character the most able to support the weight of their cause, it would be their interest to put it into the hands of Antoninus Pius. He would defend it, not with pompous systems and declamatory flourishes, but by an amiable, generous, and magnanimous conduct. I have been astonished at the character that is recorded of him. Doubtless a more distinct and explicit detail of his life would lessen our admiration. We have not the opportunity of knowing him so thoroughly as we do Socrates and Cicero. The former, by the writings of his scholars, the latter by his own, are known as minutely as if they were our contemporaries. Could the emperor be as accurately scrutinized, possibly something of the supercilious pride of the Grecian, or of the ridiculous vain-glory of the Roman patriot, might appear. They are both allowed to be very

eminent patterns of moral virtue; but yet with all the disadvantages of such imperfect historians as Victor and Julius Capitolinus, they must concede the palm to Antoninus. Despotie power, in his hands, seems to have been only an instrument of doing good to mankind. His temper was mild and gentle in a very high degree; yet the vigour of his government was as striking, as if he had been of the most keen and irritable disposition. He consulted the welfare of his subjects with great diligence: He attended to all persons and things with as minute an exactness, as if his own private property had been concerned.*—Scarcely any fault is ascribed to him, but that of a temper excessively inquisitive. His successor, the second Antoninus, owns, that he was religious without superstition; and in particular, that he was not superstitious in the worship of the gods. This we have in his Stoical Meditations, still extant.† We cannot therefore doubt but that a person of this stamp would find opportunities of knowing what Christianity was. He certainly did know something of it, and he approved of the moral conduct of Christians. He gives them the most honourable character, has no fear of them as disloyal or turbulent, and makes comparisons between them and Pagans to the advantage of the former. From an expression in the edict,—"if they be able,"—one might be tempted to suspect, that he had very little INTERNAL respect for the gods. Were there no God, no divine providence, and no future state, the virtue of this man would doubtless be as complete, and as consistent as so absurd an hypothesis will permit:—but his case shows, that it is possible, by the united influence of good sense and good temper, for a man to be extremely beneficent to his fellow-creatures without due regard to his Maker. Surely—if the holiness of a truly-converted Christian, and the mere moral virtue of a "natural man," were the same things,—Antoninus ought to be esteemed a Christian.—Yet it does not appear that he ever seriously studied the Gospel.—A sceptical carelessness and indifference, not unlike that temper, which, under the names of candour and moderation, has now overspread the face of Europe, ap-

* Juli. Capitol. Vit. Ant. chap. vii. See Lardner's Collections, chap. xiv.

† Book vi. c. 30.

pears to have possessed the mind of this amiable prince: and, while he attended to the temporal advantages of mankind, and solaced himself on his good actions, he seemed to forget that he had a soul accountable to the Supreme Being; and scarcely to think it possible, that it should have any guilt to answer for before him. The evil of such a contempt of God is what mankind are of all things least inclined to discern: Yet it is the evil of all others the most vehemently reprobated in Scripture under the several branches of idolatry, unbelief, self-righteousness, and pride. No wonder;—for, without a knowledge of this evil, and an humble sense of guilt in consequence, the very nature of the Gospel itself cannot be understood. The conclusion resulting from this consideration is, that godliness is perfectly distinct from mere morality: The latter indeed always flourishes where godliness is; but it is capable of a separate existence.

3. The edict of this good emperor is a singularly valuable testimony in favour of the Christians of that time. It appears that there were then a race of men devoted to the service of Christ, ready to die for his name and for his religion. These men exemplified the superior worth of their religion by a superior probity and innocence of manners, so as to appear the best of subjects in the opinion of an emperor of the highest candour, intelligence, and acute observation. They were not inferior to the most excellent of the heathens in morality: and they possessed, further,—what this emperor confesses their enemies were void of,—a sincere spirit of reverence for the Supreme Being,—an unshaken contempt of death,—and that to which Stoicism pretends,—a real severity of mind under the most pressing dangers;—and all this grounded on an unshaken confidence in God.—We cannot but hence conclude,—that the effusion of the Spirit of God, which began at the feast of Pentecost, was still continued. By the testimony of a heathen prince, Christians were so IN POWER, and NOT IN NAME ONLY; and those, who would substitute the virtue of the morality of fallen man in the place of the religion of Christians, would do well to consider, that sound virtue and sound morality themselves know no support like that of Christianity.—This divine religion comprehends every possible excellence that can be found in all others; and has, over

and above, its OWN PECULIAR VIRTUES:—It possesses a fund of consolation, and an energy of support under the prospect of death itself; and it points out the only safe and sure road to a blissful immortality.

CHAPTER III.

JUSTIN MARTYR.

THIS great man was born at Neapolis in Samaria, anciently called Sichem. His father was a Gentile,—probably one of the Greeks, belonging to the colony transplanted thither: He gave his son a philosophical education.—Justin in his youth travelled for the improvement of his understanding; and Alexandria afforded him all the entertainment which an inquisitive mind could derive from the fashionable studies. The Stoics appeared to him at first the masters of happiness. He gave himself up to one of this sect, till he found he could learn from him nothing of the nature of God. It is remarkable—as he tells us himself,*—that his tutor informed him,—this was a knowledge by no means necessary; which fact very much illustrates the views of Dr. Warburton, concerning these ancient philosophers: namely, that they were Atheists in reality. He next betook himself to a Peripatetic, whose anxious desire of settling the price of his instructions convinced Justin that truth did not dwell with him. A Pythagorean next engaged his attention, who, requiring of him the previous knowledge of music, astronomy, and geometry, dismissed him for the present, when he understood that he was unfurnished with those sciences. In much solicitude he applied himself to a Platonic philosopher; and with a more plausible appearance of success from this teacher than from any of the foregoing. He now gave himself to retirement. “As I was walking,” says Justin, “near the sea, I was met by an aged person of a venerable appearance, whom I beheld with much attention. We soon entered into conversation; and upon my professing a love for private meditation, the venerable old man hinted at the absurdity of mere speculation, abstracted from practice:

* His dialogue with Trypho, whence the account of his conversion is extracted.

This," continues Justin, "gave occasion to me to express my ardent desire of knowing God, and to expatiate on the praises of philosophy. The stranger by degrees endeavoured to cure me of my unmeaning admiration of Plato and Pythagoras: He pointed out the writings of the Hebrew prophets as much more ancient than any of those called philosophers; and he led me to some view of the nature of the evidences of Christianity: He added, 'above all things, pray, that the gates of light may be opened to you: for they are not discernible, nor to be understood by any one, except God and his Christ enable a man to understand.' He said many other things to the same effect: He then directed me to follow his advice; and he left me. I saw him no more; but—immediately a fire was kindled in my soul, and I had a strong affection for the prophets and for those men who are the friends of Christ: I weighed within myself the arguments of the aged stranger; and, in the end, I found the divine Scriptures to be the only sure philosophy."—We have no more particulars of the exercises of his mind in religion.—His conversion took place, from this beginning, some time in the reign of Adrian. But he has shown us enough to make it evident, that conversion was then looked upon as an inward spiritual work in the soul,—the same work of grace which the Spirit operates at this day on real Christians. There appear, in his case, an earnest thoughtfulness attended with a strong desire to know God, and also an experimental sense of his own ignorance and of the insufficiency of human resources. Then there appear farther,—the providential care of God in bringing him under the means of Christian instruction,—a direction to his soul to pray for spiritual illumination,—the divine hunger created in his heart,—and, in due time, the satisfactory comforts and privileges of real Christianity; which with him was not mere words and declarations; for he says, He found Christianity to have a formidable majesty in its nature, adapted to terrify those who are in the way of transgression, as well as a sweetness, peace, and serenity for those who are conversant in it. He owns in another of his works,* that the example of Christians suffering death so serenely

for their faith, moved his mind not a little: This is an obvious consideration, and needs not be insisted on, however worthy it may be the notice of those called philosophers in any age.—Justin after his conversion still wore the usual philosophic garb, which demonstrates that he retained, perhaps, too great an affection for the studies of his youth:† and if I mistake not, he always preserved a very strong tincture of the spirit of philosophy, though not in such a manner as to prevent his sincere attachment to the Gospel.

Coming to Rome in the time of Antoninus Pius, he there wrote a confutation of the heretics: particularly of Marcion, the son of a bishop born in Pontus; who for lewdness,‡ was ejected from the Church, and had fled to Rome, where he broached errors of an Antinomian tendency. It makes no part of my plan to define the systems of heretics; but only to speak of them as they come in my way, with a special reference to the opposition, which they made to the fundamentals of the Gospel. That holiness, "without which no man shall see the Lord," and which it was the great design of Christ to promote, found in this pretended Christian a bitter enemy. Justin, who had tasted of the holy nature of the Gospel in his own experience, withstood him both in conversation and by his writings. About the year 140, he published his excellent Apology for the Christians, addressed to Antoninus Pius, which may reasonably be supposed to have had a considerable influence on that emperor's political conduct towards the Christians.

It appears from this performance, that it was common to accuse Christians merely as such; and to charge the faults of any persons, who bore the name of the whole body.—Thus there is no new thing under the sun.—The term Christian was matter of obloquy at that time: Various other terms of scoff and contempt have been invented since; and it requires no great degree of rational power to show, as Justin has done completely, the absurdity and inconclusiveness of such methods of attacking religion, whether they be ancient or modern. He takes notice also of the happy effects which

Justin's
Apology:
A. D. 140.

* Cave's Life of Justin.

† The truth of this charge against his morals has been disputed, and possibly with justice.

* Apology second, though misnamed the first, in all the copies of Justin.

the conduct of Christians had then on mankind. "We have many instances," says he, "to show the powerful effects of example among men: Many persons have been impressed in favour of the Gospel by observing the sobriety and temperance of their neighbours,—or the unparalleled meekness of their fellow-travellers under cruel treatment; or the uncommon integrity and equity of those with whom they transacted business." These are fresh proofs of the continuance of vital religion in the time of Justin:—A man calling himself a Christian, without any practical power of the religion, would scarcely have then been classed among the brethren. I find also fresh proofs, in this apology, of the strong line of distinction kept up in those days between Christians and heretics. The author observes that the latter were fond of the name of Christians, and yet were not persecuted. There was nothing in their spirit and conduct that provoked persecution. He takes notice also of the small number of Jewish converts in comparison of the main body of the nation. But this, he observes, was agreeable to the prophecies of the Old Testament. He describes likewise the customs of the primitive Christians in public worship, and in the administration of the sacraments, in order to show the falsehood of the charges generally urged against them.

Not long after his first Apology, Justin left Rome and went to Ephesus, where he had a discourse with Trypho the Jew;—the substance of which he has given us in a dialogue. In this work he notices the common calumnies against Christians,—of their eating men,—of their extinguishing the lights,—and of their promiscuous sensuality; but treats these charges as not credited by men of sense and candour among their enemies; and therefore as not meriting a serious confutation.

On his return to Rome, he had frequent contests with Crescens the philosopher,—a man equally remarkable for malignity to Christians, and for the most horrid vices. Justin now presented his second Apology to M. Antoninus Philosophus, the successor of Pius, and a determined enemy to Christians. He had conceived hopes of softening his mind toward them, as he had done that of his predecessor,—but in vain. Marcus was their enemy during his whole reign; and they scarcely ever had an enemy more implacable.—The immediate occasion of a second Apo-

logy, as he himself informs the Emperor, was this:—

"A certain woman at Rome, had, together with her husband, lived in extreme profligacy and licentiousness. But on her conversion to Christianity, her own conduct being changed, she endeavoured to persuade her husband also to imitate her example, by representing to him the punishment of eternal fire, which in a future state would be inflicted on the disobedient. But he persisting in his wickedness, she was induced to wish for a separation. By the advice of her friends, she continued, however, to live with him, hoping that in process of time he might be brought to repentance. Upon his coming to Alexandria, he proceeded to greater lengths of wickedness, so that finding the connexion now no longer tolerable, she procured a divorce from him. He, not impressed with the happy change which had taken place in her dispositions, and unmoved with her compassionate attempts to rescue him from ruin, accused her of being a Christian. Upon which she presented a petition to you, O Emperor, that she might have time to dispose and regulate her household affairs: and she promised that after that was done, she would answer to the charge;—which petition you granted. The husband, finding his wife to have gained a respite from his malice, diverted it to another object,—to one Ptolemy, who had instructed her in Christianity, and who had been punished by Urbicius the prefect of Rome. He persuaded a centurion, his friend, to imprison Ptolemy; and to ask him whether he was a Christian. He, no flatterer or dissembler, ingenuously confessed, and was a long time punished with imprisonment. At last, when he was brought before Urbicius, and was asked only this question,—whether he was a Christian, he confessed himself a teacher of the Divine Truth. For no true Christian can act otherwise.—Urbicius, nevertheless, ordered him to be led to execution: Upon this, a Christian, named Lucius, expostulated with him on the absurdity of these proceedings,—on the iniquity of putting men to death merely for a name, abstracted from any one specific charge of guilt;—a conduct unworthy of emperors such as Pius the last, or Philosophus the present,*

* I am aware that the Greek in Justin would make it probable that Pius was then reigning; but Eusebius's contrary testimony determines me to think otherwise.

or of the sacred Senate. 'You too appear to me to be of the same sect,' was all that the prefect deigned to reply. Lucius confessed that he was; and was himself led also to execution; which he bore with triumphant serenity; declaring that he was now going from unrighteous governors to God his gracious Father and King. A third person was sentenced also to death on the same occasion. And I also," continues Justin, "expect by persons of this sort to be murdered, perhaps by Crescens the pretended philosopher. For he deserves not the name of a philosopher, who, with the view of pleasing many deceived persons, publicly accuses Christians of Atheism and impiety, though he himself be totally ignorant of their real character. I, Justin, have interrogated him, and proved that he is quite unacquainted with the subject. I am willing to undergo an examination before you in company with him. And my questions and his answers will make it evident to yourself, that he knows nothing of our affairs; or, at least, conceals what he does know."

But Marcus was not a man disposed to exercise common justice towards Christians. The philosophic garb was no shield to Justin, even in the eyes of an emperor, who piqued himself on the surname of philosopher. The sincerity of his Christian attachments outweighed every argument and every plausible appearance in his favour. Crescens procured him imprisonment for the crime of being a Christian,—the greatest evil of which a human being could be guilty in the eyes of this emperor. The acts of his martyrdom, which carry more marks of truth than many other martyrologies, give the following account: "He and six of his companions having been apprehended, were brought before Rusticus the prefect,—who, I suppose, had succeeded Urbicius,—a person of considerable eminence, and famous for his attachment to Stoicism. He had been tutor to the emperor, who acknowledges, in the first book of his *Meditations*, his obligations to him on several accounts, and particularly for his teaching him to be of a placable and forgiving temper. This is one instance, among thousands, that it is possible for a man to be strongly impressed with many beautiful ideas of morality, and still to remain an inflexible enemy to

the Gospel. Rusticus undertook to persuade Justin to obey the gods, and to comply with the emperor's edicts.—The martyr defended the reasonableness of his religion.—Upon which the governor inquired in what kind of learning and discipline he had been educated. He told him, that he had endeavoured to understand all kinds of discipline, and had tried all methods of learning, but finding satisfaction in none of them, he at last had found rest in the Christian doctrine, however fashionable it might be to despise it! Wretch! replies the indignant magistrate, art thou captivated then by THAT RELIGION? I am, says Justin; I follow the Christians, and their doctrine is right. 'What is their doctrine?' It is this: we believe the one only God to be the Creator of all things visible and invisible; and we confess our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Son of God; foretold by the prophets of old; and that he is now the Saviour, teacher, and master of all those who are duly submissive to his instructions, and that he will hereafter be the Judge of mankind.—As for myself, I am too mean to be able to say any thing becoming his infinite Deity: This was the business of the prophets, who, many ages ago, had foretold the coming of the Son of God into the world. 'Where do the Christians usually assemble?' The God of the Christians is not confined to any particular place. 'In what place do you instruct your scholars?' Justin mentioned the place in which he dwelt, and told him that there he explained Christianity to all who resorted to him. The prefect, having severally examined his companions, again addressed Justin. 'Hear thou, who hast the character of an orator, and imaginest thyself to be in the possession of the truth. If I scourge thee from head to foot, thinkest thou that thou shalt go to heaven?' Although I suffer what you threaten, yet I expect to enjoy the portion of all true Christians; as I know that the divine grace and favour is laid up for all such, and shall be so, while the world endures. 'Do you think that you shall go to heaven, and receive a reward?' I not only think so, but I know it, and have a certainty of it which excludes all doubt.—Rusticus insisted that they should all go together, and sacrifice to the gods. No man, whose understanding is sound, replies Justin, will desert true religion for the sake of error and impiety. 'Unless you comply, you shall be tormented with-

* Cave's Life of Justin.

out mercy.' We desire nothing more sincerely than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be saved. Hence our happiness is promoted; and we shall have confidence before the awful tribunal of our Lord and Saviour, before which, by the divine appointment, the whole world must appear. The rest assented, and said,—Despatch quickly your purpose; we are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols.' The governor then pronounced sentence,—As to those, who refuse to sacrifice to the gods, and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged, and then beheaded according to the laws.' The martyrs rejoiced and blessed God, and being led back to prison, were whipped and afterwards beheaded. Their dead bodies were taken by Christian friends, and decently interred."

Martyr-
dom of
Justin, &c.
A. D. 163.

Thus slept in Jesus the Christian philosopher Justin, about the year 163, and about the third or fourth year of the reign of Marcus. Like many of the ancient fathers, he appears to us under the greatest disadvantage. Works really his have been lost; and others have been ascribed to him; part of which are not his; and the rest, at least, of ambiguous authority. He is the first Christian since the Apostle's days, who added to an unquestionable zeal and love for the Gospel, the character of a man of learning and philosophy. His early habits were retained; and yet were consecrated to the service of God. This man, surely, should not be suspected of unreasonable prejudices and fancies. His religion was the effect of serious and long meditation; and the very best and most important use which a gentleman and a scholar can make of his rational faculties,—namely,—to determine his choice in religion,—was made by Justin. He examined the various philosophic sects, not merely for the purpose of amusement or ostentation, but to find out God; and in God true happiness: He tried and found them all wanting: He sought him in the Gospel: He found him there: He confessed him: He gave up every thing for him: He was satisfied with his choice; and he died in serenity. His persevering in the profession of philosophy might probably have another view besides the gratification of his own taste: He might hope to conciliate the affections of philosophers, and allure them to Christianity. The charity of his heart

appears indeed to have been great: He prayed for all men: He declined no dangers for the good of souls; and he involved himself in disputes with philosophers for their benefit, to his own extreme hazard. His house was open for the instruction of all who consulted him; though he seems to have never assumed the ecclesiastical character. To draw gentlemen and persons of liberal education to pay attention to Christianity, appears to have been his chief employment. But he found it easier to provoke opposition, and to throw away his own life, than to persuade a single philosopher to become a Christian. The danger of learned pride, the vanity of hoping to disarm the enmity of the wise of this world by the most charitable concessions, and the incurable prejudice of the great against the humble religion of Jesus, are much illustrated by his story. So is the victorious efficacy of Divine Grace, which singled out Justin from a race of men, of all others the most opposite to Christ. We have seen a philosopher persecuted to death: informed against by one of his brethren; condemned by another, and suffering by the authority of an emperor who gloried more in the philosophic than in the imperial name. A man of his learning and sagacity should not rashly be supposed destitute of argument and system in his views. Men of sense will scarcely think the ideas of such a person unworthy of their regard.—Let us see then briefly what were Justin's sentiments in religion. We may possibly be led to conclude that Christian principles may be seriously maintained in consistence with the love of science and letters; though perhaps we may observe some degree of adulteration, which these principles received, by passing through a channel of all others the most unfavourable for the conducting of their course,—the channel of philosophy.*

It is certain that Justin worshipped Christ as the true God in the full and proper sense of the words. We have seen one testimony of it already in his examination before Rusticus. But let the

* It scarcely need be repeated, that by this term I mean all along that philosophy of the ancients, which was founded in pride, was chiefly speculative and metaphysical, and at bottom atheistical—no one objects to those moral maxims of the ancient philosophers, which were in many instances excellent, though defective in principle.

reader hear his own words. Trypho* the Jew finds fault with the Christians on account of this very sentiment. "To me it appears," says he, "a paradox incapable of any sound proof, to say, that this Christ was God before all time; and that then he was made man and suffered: And to assert that he was any thing more than a man, and of men, appears not only paradoxical, but foolish." "I know," answered Justin, "that it appears paradoxical; and particularly to those of your nation, who are determined neither to know nor do the will of God, but to follow the inventions of your teachers, as God declares of you. However, if I could not demonstrate that he existed before all time, being God the Son of the Maker of the universe, and that he was made man of the Virgin; yet, as this personage was shown by every sort of proof to be the Christ of God, be the question as it may respecting his Divinity and Humanity, you have no right to deny that he is the Christ of God, even if he were only mere man: you could only say, that I was mistaken in my idea of his character. For there are some who call themselves Christians, who confess him to be the Christ, but still maintain that he is a mere man only, with whom I agree not; neither do most of those who bear that name agree with them; because we are commanded by Christ himself not to obey the precepts of men, but his own injunctions, and those of the holy prophets." "Those," says Trypho, "who say that he was man only, and that he was in a particular manner anointed, and made Christ, appear to me to speak more rationally than you. For we all expect Christ a man, of men; and that Elias will come to anoint him." The purport of this whole passage is plain: The GENERAL body of Christians in the second century held the proper Deity of Jesus Christ: They believed that this was a part of Old Testament revelation; and they looked on a small number, who held his mere humanity, to be men who preferred human teachers to divine. They considered the Jews also, the most implacable enemies of Christianity, as choosing to be directed rather by human teachers than by the divine oracles; and as inexcusable in denying the Divine Mission of Christ, whatever opinion they might have formed of his person.—Let the learned reader judge for

himself, by turning to the passage in Justin, whether it will not bear the weight which I have laid upon it.—The testimony of a man so thoughtful, judicious, and honest as Justin, must be decisive, or nearly so; and therefore, must, in a great measure, determine the question much agitated in our times, relative to the opinion of the Ancients, concerning the person of Christ.

In another part of the same dialogue,* he speaks of Christ as the God of Israel who was with Moses; and explains his meaning when he said that true Christians regarded what they were taught by the prophets. In his first Apology, he tells the emperor in WHAT SENSE Christians were Atheists: They did not worship the gods commonly so called, but they† worshipped and adored the true God, and his Son, and the prophetic Spirit, honouring them in word and in truth. If those, who call themselves Unitarians, were as candid and impartial as they profess, the controversy concerning the Trinity would be soon at an end.—That the primitive Christians worshipped one God alone, all who espouse the doctrine of the Trinity will allow. Let the Unitarians with equal frankness acknowledge that they worshipped the one God in the three persons just now mentioned; and then we have the Trinity in Unity. Further—Justin uses two terms usually expressive of that worship and adoration, which incommunicably belongs to the Deity.‡—But, till there be a disposition in men, without disputation, to humble themselves before divine Revelation, neither frankness in concession, nor unity of sentiment, is to be expected.

The all-important doctrine of Justification he states§ in the same manner as St. Paul does; believing, that to press the necessity of Mosaic rites on others was to fall from the faith of Christ. The learned reader may see more at large his views of Regeneration and Forgiveness of all past sins through Christ Jesus,|| and how extremely different they were from the nominal Christianity which contents so many persons.

He appears to have had the clearest views of that special illumination, without which no man will understand and

* P. 56. † P. 137.

‡ *ἑκείνους καὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν.*

§ Dialogue 62.

|| 1st Apology, 159, 160, and 68 Dialogue.

* Dialogue, p. 63.

relish real godliness. His first unknown instructor had taught him this; and he seems never to have forgotten it. He informs Trypho,—that, for their wickedness, God had hidden from the Jews the power of knowing divine wisdom, except from a remnant, who according to the grace of his compassion were reserved, that their nation might not be like Sodom and Gomorrah.—The eternal punishment of the wicked he avows so plainly, that I shall spare quotations upon that subject.

In fundamentals he was unquestionably sound: Yet there seems, however, something in his train of thinking, which was the effect of his philosophic spirit; and which produced notions not altogether agreeable to the genius of the Gospel. Thus, toward the close of the second Apology, he declares that the doctrines of Plato were not heterogeneous to those of Christ; but only NOT ALTOGETHER similar. And he seems to assert, that Plato, and the Stoics, and the Pagan writers, in prose and verse, saw something of truth from the portion of the seed of the Divine Word, which he makes to be the same as the Word, the only begotten Son of God. The reader, who chooses to consult the last folio page of the Apology, may judge for himself, whether he does not there confound together two things perfectly distinct,—the light of natural conscience which God has given to all men;—and the light of divine grace peculiar to the children of God. Certain it is that St. Paul, who speaks of both, in the epistle to the Romans, always carefully distinguishes them, as of a kind entirely different one from the other. He never allows unconverted men to have any portion at all of that light which is peculiarly Christian: But thus it was that this excellent man seems to have forgotten the guard, which can scarcely be too often repeated, against philosophy. We may see hereafter how mystics and heretics and phantasmagoric Christians jumbled these things together entirely, and what attempts were made by the philosophers to incorporate their doctrine of the *True* with the Gospel.* Justin seems, unwarily, to have given them some han-

dle for this: and, if I mistake not, he was the first sincere Christian who was seduced by human philosophy to adulterate the Gospel, though in a small degree. It should ever be remembered, that Christian light stands single and unmingled; and will not bear to be kneaded into the same mass with other systems, religious or philosophical.—We may here mark the beginning of the decay of the first spiritual effusion among the Gentiles, through false wisdom: as, long before,—namely,—from the first council of Jerusalem,—we noticed a similar decay in the Jewish Church, through self-righteousness.

The same prejudice in favour of the instructor of his youth leads him to pay to Socrates a very great compliment, as if that extraordinary man had really known the true God, and had lost his life for attempting to draw men from idolatry.—Whereas almost every line of the narrative left us by his disciples shows, that he was as much an idolater as the rest of his countrymen.—The last words he uttered, it is well known, were entirely idolatrous.—Justin had not learnt so fully as St. Paul would have taught him, that “the world by wisdom knew not God.” In the last page of his Trypho there is also a phraseology extremely suspicious. He speaks of a self-determining power in man,* and uses much the same kind of reasoning on the obscure subject of free-will as has been fashionable with many since the days of Arminius. He seems to have been the first of all sincere Christians, who introduced this foreign plant into Christian ground. I shall venture to call it foreign till its right to exist in the soil shall be proved from scriptural evidence.—It is very plain that I do not mistake his meaning,—because he never explicitly owns the doctrine of Election; though, with happy inconsistency, like many other real Christians, he involved it in his experience, and implies it in various parts of his writings.

But,—the novelty, once admitted, was not easily expelled:—The language of the Church was silently and gradually changed, in this respect, from that more simple and scriptural mode of speaking used by Clement and Ignatius: Those primitive Christians knew the doctrine of the Election of Grace, but not the self-

* An abstruse and mystical opinion, which prevailed very generally among the ancient philosophers, but which it is difficult to make intelligible by an explanation. It differs, however, very little, if at all, from downright Atheism.

* *Autogenes.*

determining power of the human will:—We shall see hereafter the progress of the evil, and its arrival at full maturity under the fostering hand of Pelagius.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EMPEROR MARCUS ANTONINUS, AND HIS PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

HE succeeded Pius in the year 161, and appears very soon after to have commenced the persecution against the Christians, in which Justin and his

Marcus Antoninus made emperor:

A. D. 161.

friends were slain. It excites a curiosity, not foreign from the design of this History, to discover what could be the cause of so much enmity against a people confessedly harmless, in a prince so considerate, so humane, and, in general, so well-intentioned as Marcus is allowed to have been.—Besides; he acted in this respect directly contrary to the example of his predecessor, whose memory he doubtless much revered, from whose intelligent and investigating spirit he must have derived ample information concerning the Christians, and whom in all other matters of government he imitated so exactly. The fact, however, is certainly so: Marcus Antoninus was, during all his reign, which continued 19 years, an implacable persecutor of Christians; and this not from mere ignorance of their moral character.—He knew them,—yet hated them, and showed them no mercy: He allowed and encouraged the most barbarous treatment of their persons; and was yet himself a person of great humanity of temper: just and beneficent to the rest of mankind: He was free from all reproach in his general conduct; and in several parts of it was a model worthy the imitation even of Christians.

I think it impossible to solve this phenomenon on any other principles than those by which the enmity of many philosophers of old, and of many devotees and exact moralists of modern times against the Christian religion, is to be explained. The Gospel is in its own nature not only distinct from careless and dissolute vice, but, also from the whole religion of philosophers: I mean of those philosophers who form to themselves a religion from natural and self-devised

sources, either in opposition to the revealed word of God, or with the neglect both of that word and of the influence of the Holy Spirit, who is the great agent in applying the Scriptures to the heart of man.—In all ages it will be found that the more strenuously men support such religion the more vehemently do they hate Christianity. Their religion is pride and self-importance: It denies the fallen state of man, the provision and efficacy of grace, and the glory of God and the Redeemer.—The enmity hence occasioned is obvious.—It must be considered also, that Marcus Antoninus was of the Stoical sect,—who carried self-sufficiency to the utmost pitch.

He fancied that he carried God within him. Like most of the philosophers, he held the mystical doctrine of the *Tao*; but he held it in all its detestable impiety and arrogance. With him to be good and virtuous was the easiest thing in the world: It was only to follow nature, and to obey the dictates of the Deity,—that is, of the human soul, which was divine and self-sufficient. With these views, he could neither be humble; nor pray earnestly; nor feel his own internal wickedness and misery; nor endure the idea of a Saviour and Mediator.—If, like his predecessor, Pius, he had been contented to be an ordinary person in religion, the humility of his temper would PROBABLY have led him, as it did the emperor Pius, to have respected the excellent character and virtues of Christians; and he would have felt it his duty to have protected such peaceable and deserving subjects.—I say, PROBABLY; and I express myself with some reserve, because I much doubt, whether he possessed an understanding equally sound with that of Antoninus Pius.—But, be that as it may, the pride of philosophy appears to have been wounded and exasperated. Whoever has attended to the spirit which pervades his twelve Books of Meditations, and duly compared them with the doctrines of the Gospel, must acknowledge a total opposition; and then he will not wonder that Christians suffered from a serious Stoic, what might have been expected only from a flagitious Nero.—Pride and licentiousness are equally condemned by the Gospel; and they equally seek revenge.—If this be a true state of the case, the philosophic spirit explained and stated as above, however differently modified in different ages, will always be inimical to

the Gospel; and the most decorous moralist belonging to the class of which we are now speaking, will be found in union, on this subject, with the basest characters. "Beware of philosophy," is a precept which as much calls for our attention now as ever.

Yet so fascinating is the power of prejudice and education, that many would look on it as a grievous crime to attempt to tear the laurels of virtue from the brow of Marcus Antoninus. Certainly, however, if his virtue had been genuine; or at all of a piece with that of the Scriptures, he could never have treated Christians so cruelly, as we shall see he did.

Is this, then, the man, whom Mr. Pope celebrates in the following lines?

Who noble ends by noble means obtains,
Or falling, smites in exile or in chains,
Take good! Aurelius let him reign or bleed
Like Socrates, that man is great indeed.

—Providence seems however to have determined, that those who, in contradiction to the feelings of human nature, dark and indignant as it is, and needing a divine illumination, will yet proudly exalt their own ability and sufficiency, shall be frustrated and put to shame. Socrates, with his last breath, gave a sanction to the most absurd idolatry: and Aurelius was guilty of such deeds as human nature shudders to relate.

It is remarkable that Gataker, the editor of Antoninus's *Meditations*, represents himself in the most humiliating terms, as quite ashamed to behold the supposed virtues of this prince as described in this book.—To say and to do, are, however, not the same things; nor is there much reason to believe, that Marcus performed in practice, what he describes in theory.—But exclusively of these reflections, suppose we were inclined to draw a comparison between the author and his commentator with respect to humility, such comparison would certainly be much to the disadvantage of the former. I pretend not to have studied the writings of Marcus Aurelius with so much anxious care as to be assured, that there appear in them no traces of this virtue in the emperor; but the general tenor of the whole book leads me to conclude, that the writer felt no abasing thoughts of himself. I have already defined in what sense I use the term philosopher, as contrasted with the humble

follower of Jesus Christ: and in that sense I affirm that no philosopher made such a confession of himself as Gataker does.—Such is the natural effect of some knowledge of Christianity on the human mind!

If we attend to the notices of history on the education and manners of Marcus, the account which has been given of his enmity against the Gospel will be amply confirmed. Adrian had introduced him among the Salian priests when eight years old, and he became accurately versed in the rituals of his priesthood. At twelve he began to wear the philosopher's cloak: he practised austerities: he lay on the bare ground; and was with difficulty persuaded by his mother to use a mattress and slight coverlet. He placed in his private chapel gold statues of his deceased masters; and visited their sepulchral monuments; and their offered sacrifices, and strewed flowers.—So devoted was he to Stoicism, that he attended the schools after he became emperor; and the faith which he put in dreams sufficiently proves his superstitious credulity. From a man so much lifted up by self-sufficiency, bigotry, and superstition, an illiberal censure of the Christians* is not matter of surprise. "This readiness," says he, "of being resigned to the prospect of death, ought to proceed from a propriety of deliberate judgment, not from mere unintelligent obscurity, as is the case with the Christians; it should be founded on grounds of solid reason, and be attended with calm composure without any tragical raptures, and in such a way as may induce others to admire and imitate." If this emperor had ever attended, with any degree of candour and impartiality, to the dying scenes of Christians tortured to death by his orders, he might have seen all these circumstances exemplified. Thousands of them chose to suffer with deliberate judgment; preferred heavenly things to earthly; counted the cost; and made a reasonable decision; not doubtful, as the emperor was, concerning a future life; but calmly resigning this life in firm expectation of a better, and without any circumstances to justify the suspicion of pride or ostentation; on the contrary, they were adorned with meekness, cheerfulness, and charity.—Hence thousands and ten thousands have been

* Antoninus was called also Aurelius.

* 11th B. Sect. 3.

induced to examine what that hidden enmity of Christian life must be, which produces such exalted sentiments and such grandeur of spirit. In fact the power of prejudice was never more strongly exhibited than in this malignant censure of Antoninus; which in truth is the more inexcusable, because he laboured under no involuntary ignorance of Christians. For, besides the knowledge of them which he must have acquired under his predecessor, he had an opportunity of knowing them from various Apologies published in his own reign. Justin's second Apology, as we have seen, was published during his reign; one sentence of which demonstrates, in how striking a manner our Saviour's prophecy was then fulfilled, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household!"—Every where, he observes, if a Gentile was reproved by a father or relation, he would revenge himself by informing against the reprover; in consequence of which he was liable to be dragged before the governor, and put to death. Tatian also, Athenagoras, Apollinaris bishop of Hierapolis, and Theophilus of Antioch, and Melito of Sardis, published Apologies.—

Apologies
for Chris-
tians :

A. D. 177.

This last published his about the year 177, of which some valuable remains are preserved in Eusebius. A part of his address to Marcus deserves our attention,* both on account of the justness of the sentiments, and the politeness with which they are delivered. "Pious persons, aggrieved by new edicts published throughout Asia, and never before practised, now suffer persecution. For audacious sycophants, and men who covet other persons' goods, take advantage of these proclamations openly to rob and spoil the innocent by night and by day. If this be done through your order,—let it stand good ;—for a just emperor cannot act unjustly; and we will cheerfully submit to the honour of such a death:—This only we humbly crave of your Majesty, that, after an impartial examination of us and of our accusers, you would justly decide whether we deserve death and punishment, or life and protection. But, if these proceedings be not yours, and the new edicts be not the effects of your personal judgment,—edicts which ought not to be enacted even against barbarian enemies,—in that

case we entreat you not to despise us, who are thus unjustly oppressed." He afterwards reminds him of the justice done to Christians by his two immediate predecessors.*

From this account it is evident that Marcus, by new edicts, commenced the persecution, and that it was carried on with merciless barbarity in those Asiatic regions which had been relieved by Pius. There is nothing pleasant that can be suggested to us by this view of the cruel treatment of Christians, and of the author of it, except one circumstance,—that the effusion of the spirit of God still continued to produce its holy fruits in those highly-favoured regions.

In the two next chapters I propose to describe distinctly two scenes of this emperor's persecution; and I shall now conclude this general account of him, with briefly mentioning the remarkable story of his danger and relief in the war

Aurelius
conquers
the Mar-
comanni :

* It can make no material difference, whether these edicts were absolutely new, or whether they were only the continuation of former edicts, with the knowledge and support, or even the connivance of Marcus :

1. It is with pain that I read in a celebrated author, "That the Meditations of Marcus Antoninus have contributed more perhaps to the general admiration of his character, than all the different transactions of his just, merciful, and beneficent reign."—Adam Smith's Moral Sent. Vol. I. p. 416.

2. Let the Christian reader compare this with Mosheim, Cent. II. Part I. Ch. II. sect. 5 : "Most writers," says he, "have celebrated Marcus beyond measure, on account of his extraordinary wisdom and virtue. It is not, however, in his conduct towards the Christians that we are to look for the reasons of these pompous encomiums; for here the clemency and justice of that emperor suffers a strange eclipse. . . . So that if we except Nero, there was no reign under which the Christians were more injuriously and cruelly treated. . . . Among the victims of his persecution, were the holy and venerable Polycarp bishop of Smyrna; and also Justin Martyr, so deservedly renowned for his erudition and philosophy."

3. Consult also Lardner's Testim. &c. Vol. II. 215 : "Marcus certainly deserves to be reckoned among the persecuting emperors.—The governor in Gaul applied to him for directions, and he wrote back, that they who confessed themselves Christians should be put to death, but that they who denied it might be set at liberty."

4. There is no doubt of the authenticity of this last-mentioned rescript; and it is an indelible blot on the memory of this celebrated emperor.

of the Marcomanni.* He and his army being hemmed in by the enemy, were ready to perish with thirst; when suddenly a storm of thunder and lightning affrighted the enemies, whilst the rain refreshed the Romans. It is evident that the victory was obtained by a remarkable providential interposition. The Christian soldiers in his army, we are sure, in their distress would pray to their God, even if Eusebius had not told us so. All Christian writers speak of the relief as vouchsafed in answer to their prayers, and no real Christian will doubt of the soundness of their judgment in this point. I have only to add, that Marcus, in a manner agreeable to his usual superstition, ascribed his deliverance to his gods.—Each party judged according to their own views; and those moderns who ascribe the whole to the ordinary powers of nature, or to accident, judge also according to their usual profaneness or irreligious turn of thinking. Whether the Divine interposition deserves to be called a miracle or not, is a question rather concerning propriety of language than religion. This seems to me all that is needful to be said on a fact, which on one side has been magnified beyond all bounds; and on the other has been reduced to mere insignificance. It happened in the year 174. The emperor lived five years after this event, and as far as appears, continued a persecutor to the last.

CHAPTER V.

MARTYRDOM OF POLYCARP.

In or about the year 167, the sixth of Marcus, Smyrna was distinguished by the martyrdom of her bishop, Polycarp. We mentioned him before in the account of Ignatius.—He had succeeded Eusebius, a vigilant and industrious bishop, in the charge of Smyrna. The Apostles,—and we may suppose St. John particularly,—obtained him to this office. He had been familiarly conversant with the Apostles, and received the government of the Church from those who had been eyewitnesses and ministers of our Lord;—and he continually taught that which he

had been taught by them.* Usher† has laboured to show‡ that he was the ANGEL of the Church of Smyrna addressed by our Saviour. If he be right in this, the character of Polycarp is indeed delineated by a hand divine; and the martyrdom before us was particularly predicted. By this account he must have presided 74 years over that Church: certainly, as we shall hereafter see, his age must have been extremely great: he long survived his friend Ignatius; and was reserved to suffer by Marcus Antoninus. Some time before that event he came to Rome to hold a conference with Anicetus, the bishop of that see, concerning the time of observing Easter. The matter was soon decided between them, as all matters should be, which enter not into the essence of godliness. They each observed their own customs without any breach of charity between them, real or apparent. But Polycarp found more important employment while at Rome. The heresy of Marcion was strong in that city; and the testimony and zealous labours of one who had known so much of the Apostles were successfully employed against it; and many were reclaimed. It was not in Marcion's power to undermine the authority of this venerable Asiatic. To procure a seeming coalition was the utmost he could expect; and it was as suitable to his views to attempt this, as it was to those of Polycarp to oppose such duplicity and artifice. Meeting him one day in the street, he called out to him, "Polycarp, own us." "I do own thee," says the zealous bishop, "to be the first born of Satan." I refer the reader to what has been said already of St. John's similar conduct on such occasions; and shall add only that Irenæus, from whom Eusebius relates the story, commends his conduct, and speaks of it as commonly practised by the Apostles and their followers. Irenæus informs us,§ that he had a particular delight in recounting what had been told by those who had seen Christ in the flesh; that he used to relate also what he had heard concerning his doctrine and miracles; and when he was informed of any heretical attempts to overturn Christian fundamentals, he would cry out, "To

* Euseb. B. v. C. 5.

* Euseb. iv. 14.

† In his Prefegom. to Ignatius.

‡ Cave's Life of Polycarp.

§ Irenæus's Epistle to Florina.

what times, O God, hast thou reserved me!" and would leave the place.

Indeed when it is considered what Marcion maintained, and what unquestionable evidence Polycarp had against him in point of matter of fact, we shall see he had just reason to testify his disapprobation. This man was one of the *Docetæ*: According to him, Christ had no real human nature: He rejected the whole Old Testament, and mutilated the New. He held two principles, after the manner of the Manichees, in order to account for the origin of the evil. If men, who assert things so fundamentally subversive of the Gospel, would openly disavow the Christian name, they might be endured with much more composure by Christians; nor would there be any call for so scrupulous an absence from their society; for St. Paul has so determined the case.* But for such men, whether ancient or modern, to call themselves Christians, is an intolerable insult on the common sense of mankind.—We know nothing more of the life of this venerable bishop:—Of the circumstances of his death we have an account, and they deserve a very particular relation.

The greatest part of the ancient narrative is preserved by Eusebius.† The beginning and the end, which he has not given us, have been restored by the care of archbishop Usher. It is an epistle written in the name of Polycarp's Church of Smyrna: I have ventured to translate the whole myself, yet not without examining what Valesius, the editor of Eusebius, and archbishop Wake, have left us on the subject. It is doubtless one of the most precious ornaments of antiquity; and it seemed to deserve some notes and illustrations.

"The Church of God which sojourns at Smyrna, to that which sojourns at Philomelium,‡ and in all places where the Holy Catholic Church sojourns throughout the world, may the mercy, peace, and love of God the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied! We have written to you, brethren, as well concerning the other martyrs, as particularly the blessed Polycarp; who, as it were, seal-

ing by his testimony, closed the persecution. For all these things, which were done, were so conducted, that the Lord from above might exhibit to us the nature of a martyrdom perfectly evangelical. Polycarp did not precipitately give himself up to death, but waited till he was apprehended, as our Lord himself did, that we might imitate him; not caring only for ourselves, but also for our neighbours. It is the office of solid and genuine charity not to desire our own salvation only, but also that of all the brethren.* Blessed and noble indeed are all martyrdoms which are regulated according to the will of God: for it behoves us, who assume to ourselves the character of Christians,—a name professing distinguished sanctity,—to submit to God alone the disposal of all events.† Doubtless their magnanimity, their patience, their love of the Lord, deserve the admiration of every one; who, though torn with whips till the frame and structure of their bodies were laid open even to their veins and arteries, yet meekly endured; so that those who stood around pitied them and lamented. But such was their fortitude, that no one of them uttered a sigh or groan: Thus they evinced to us all, that at that hour the martyrs of Christ, though tormented, were absent, as it were, from the body; or rather that the Lord, being present, conversed familiarly with them: thus they were supported by the grace of Christ; thus they despised the torments of this world, and by one hour redeemed themselves from eternal punishment. The fire of savage tormentors was cold to them: for they had steadily in view a desire to avoid that fire which is eternal and never to be quenched. And with the eyes of their heart they had respect to the good things reserved for those who endure,—

* I translate according to the Greek. But, though common candour may put a favourable construction on the expressions, the honour then put on martyrdom seems excessive.

† They doubtless mean to censure the self-will of those who threw themselves on their persecutors before they were providentially called to suffer. The calm patience of Polycarp, in this respect, was more commendable than the impetuosity of Ignatius. But Polycarp now was much older than he was when Ignatius suffered, and very probably had known in grace. The Asiatic churches seem to have corrected the errors of excessive zeal, which even in the best Christians had formerly prevailed. The case of Quintus will soon throw light on this subject.

* 1 Cor. v. 10.

† B. iv. Euseb. Hist. ch. 15.

‡ A city of Lycaonia. I thought it right to give the English reader the precise term—of sojourning—used in the original. It was the ordinary language and also the spirit of the Church at that time.

THINGS—WHICH EYE HATH NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HATH IT ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN TO CONCEIVE. But these good things were then exhibited to them by the Lord: They were indeed then no longer men, but angels. In like manner those, who were condemned to the wild beasts, underwent for a time cruel torments, being placed under shells of sea fish, and exposed to various other tortures, that, if possible, the infernal tyrant, by an uninterrupted series of suffering, might tempt them to deny their Master. Much did Satan contrive against them: * but, thanks to God, without effect against them all. The magnanimous Germanicus, by his patience and courage, strengthened the weak: He fought with wild beasts in an illustrious manner; for when the proconsul besought him to pity his own old age, he irritated the wild beasts by provocation, and was desirous of departing more quickly from a world of wickedness.—And now the whole multitude, astonished at the fortitude of Christians, that is, of the true friends and worshippers of God, cried out, 'Take away the atheists,† let Polycarp be sought for.' One Christian, by name Quintus, lately came from Phrygia, his native country, on sight of the beasts, trembled. He had persuaded some persons to present themselves before the tribunal of their own accord. Him the proconsul, by soothing speeches, induced to swear and to sacrifice. On this account, brethren, we do not approve of those who offer themselves to martyrdom;—for we have not so learned Christ.*

"The admirable Polycarp, when he heard what passed, was quite unmoved, and resolved to remain in the city. But, induced by the intreaties of his people, he retired to a village at no great distance; and there, with a few friends, he spent his time entirely, day and night, in praying, according to his usual custom, for all the churches in the world.—Three days before he was seized, he had a vision while he was praying: He saw his pillow consumed by fire; and turning to the company, he said prophetically, 'I must be burnt alive.'—Upon

hearing that the persons in search of him, were just at hand, he retired to another village: Immediately the officers came to his house; and not finding him, they seized two servants, one of whom was induced, by torture, to confess the place of his retreat. Certainly it was impossible to conceal him, since even those of his own household discovered him. And the tetrarch, called Cleronomus Herod, hastened to introduce him into the Stadium; that so he might obtain his lot as a follower of Christ; and that those, who betrayed him, might share with Judas. Taking then the servant as their guide, they went out about supper-time, with their usual arms, as against a robber; and arriving late, they found him lying in an upper room at the end of the house, whence he might have made his escape,* but he would not, saying,—'The will of the Lord be done.' Hearing that they were arrived, he came down and conversed with them; and all, who were present, admired his age and constancy: Some said, "Is it worth while to take pains to apprehend so aged a person?" He immediately ordered meat and drink to be set before them, as much as they pleased, and begged them to allow him one hour to pray without molestation; which being granted, he prayed standing; and was so full of the grace of God, that he could not cease from speaking for two hours: The hearers were astonished; and many of them repented that they were come to seize so divine a character.

"When he had finished his prayers, having made mention of all whom he had ever known, small and great, noble and vulgar, and of the whole Catholic church throughout the world, the hour of departing being come, they set him on an ass and led him to the city.† The Irenarch Herod, and his father Nicetes, met him, who taking him up into their chariot, began to advise him, asking, 'What harm is it to say, Lord Caesar!—and to sacrifice, and be safe?' At first he was silent, but being pressed, he said, 'I will not follow your advice.' When they could not persuade him, they treated him abusively, and thrust him out of the cha-

* The language of these ancient Christians deserves to be noticed; they have their eye more steadily on a divine influence on the one hand, and on a diabolical one on the other, than is fashionable in our times.

† The term of reproach then commonly affixed to Christians.

* Those who know the eastern custom of flat-roofed houses, will not be surprised at this.

† I have not thought it worth while to translate what relates to the time when Polycarp suffered, on which point the learned disagree in the mode of interpretation.

riot, so that in falling he bruised his thigh. But he, still unmoved as if he had suffered nothing, went on cheerfully under the conduct of his guards to the Stadium. There the tumult being so great that few could hear any thing, a voice from heaven said to Polycarp, as he entered on the Stadium, "Be strong, Polycarp, and behave yourself like a man."—None saw the speaker, but many of us heard the voice."

"When he was brought to the tribunal, there was a great tumult, as soon as it was generally understood that Polycarp was apprehended. The proconsul asked him, if he was Polycarp; to which he assented. The former then

began to exhort him:—"Have pity on thy own great age—and the like. Swear by the fortune of Cæsar—repent—say—Take away the atheists." Polycarp, with a grave aspect, beholding all the multitude, waving his hand to them, and looking up to heaven, said, "Take away the atheists." The proconsul urging him, and saying, "Swear, and I will release thee,—reproach Christ;" Polycarp said, "Eighty-and-six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me, and how can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me?" The proconsul still urging, "Swear by the fortune of Cæsar;" Polycarp said, "If you still vainly contend to make me swear by the fortune of Cæsar, as you speak, affecting an ignorance of my real character, hear me frankly declaring what I am: I am a Christian; and if you desire to learn the Christian doctrine, assign me a day, and hear." The proconsul said, "Persuade the people." Polycarp said, "I have thought proper to address you; for we are taught to pay to magistracies and powers appointed by God, all honour, which is consistent with a good conscience. But I do not hold them worthy that I should apologize for them." "I have wild beasts," says the proconsul: "I will expose you to them, unless you repent." "Call them," replies the martyr. "Our minds are to be changed from the better to the worse: but it is a

good thing to be changed from evil to good." "I will tame your spirit by fire," says the other, "since you despise the wild beasts, unless you repent." "You threaten me with fire," answers Polycarp, "which burns for a moment, and will be soon extinct: but you are ignorant of the future judgment, and of the fire of eternal punishment reserved for the ungodly. But why do you delay?—Do what you please." Saying this and more, he was filled with confidence and joy; and grace shone in his countenance: so that he was far from being confounded by these menaces: On the contrary the proconsul was visibly embarrassed: he sent, however, the herald to proclaim thrice, in the midst of the assembly, "Polycarp hath professed himself a Christian." Upon this all the multitude, both of Gentiles and of Jews, who dwelt at Smyrna, with insatiate rage shouted aloud, "This is the doctor of Asia, the father of Christians, the subverter of our gods, who hath taught many not to sacrifice nor to adore." They now begged Philip, the Asiarch, to let out a lion against Polycarp. But he refused, observing that the amphitheatrical spectacles of the wild beasts were finished. They then unanimously shouted, that he should be burnt alive;—for his vision was of necessity to be accomplished.—Whilst he was praying, he observed the fire kindling; and turning to the faithful that were with him, he said prophetically,—"I must be burnt alive." The business was executed with all possible speed; for the people immediately gathered fuel from the workshops and baths, in which employment the Jews distinguished themselves with their usual malice. As soon as the fire was prepared, stripping off his clothes, and loosing his girdle, he attempted to take off his shoes,—a thing unusual for him to do formerly,—because each of the faithful were wont to strive who should be most assiduous in serving him. For, before his martyrdom, his integrity and blameless conduct had always procured him the most unfeigned respect. Immediately

* The reader should remember that miraculous interpositions of various kinds were still frequent in the church.

† I cannot think that this was said in contempt of the vulgar, but on account of the prejudices and enmity which their conduct exhibited at that time.

* I scarcely know a more striking view of the judicial curse inflicted on the Jews than this. Indeed this people all along excited themselves in persecution; and Justin Martyr tells us of a charge which had been sent from Jerusalem by the chief priests against Christians, directed to their brethren through the world.

the usual appendages of burning were placed about him. And when they were going to fasten him to the stake, he said, 'Let me remain as I am: for He who giveth me strength to sustain the fire, will enable me also, without your securing me with nails, to remain unmoved in the fire.' Upon which they bound him without maling him. And he, putting his hands behind him, and being bound as a distinguished man, selected from a great flock, a burnt-offering acceptable to God Almighty, said, 'O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, through whom we have attained the knowledge of thee, O God of angels and principalities, and of all creation, and of all the just who live in thy sight, I bless thee, that thou hast counted me worthy of this day, and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of martyrs, in the cup of Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life both of soul and body, in the resurrection of the Holy Ghost; among whom may I be received before thee this day as a sacrifice well-savour'd and acceptable, which thou, the faithful and true God, hast prepared, promised beforehand, and fulfilled accordingly. Wherefore I praise thee for all those things, I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy well-beloved Son; through whom, with him in the Holy Spirit, be glory to thee both now and for ever. AMEN.'

"And when he had pronounced Amen aloud, and finished his prayer, the officers lighted the fire; and a great flame bursting out,—We, to whom it was given to see, and who also were reserved to relate to others that which happened,—saw a wonder.—For the flame, forming the appearance of an arch, as the sail of a vessel filled with wind, was as a wall round about the body of the martyr; which was in the midst, not as burning flesh, but as gold and silver refined in the furnace. We received also in our nostrils such a fragrance, as arises from frankincense, or some other precious perfume. At length the impious, observing that his body could not be consumed by the fire, ordered the confessor* to approach, and to plunge his sword into his body. Upon this a quantity of blood gushed out, so that the fire was extinguished; and all the multitude were astonished to see the difference thus providentially made be-

tween the unbelievers and the elect; of whom the admirable personage before us was, doubtless, one, in our age an apostolical and prophetic teacher, the bishop of the Catholic church of Smyrna. For, whatever he declared, was fulfilled and will be fulfilled. But the envious, malignant, and spiteful enemy of the just, observed the honour put on his martyrdom, and his blameless life; and knowing that he was now crowned with immortality and the prize of unquestionable victory, studied to prevent us from obtaining his body, though many of us longed to have communion* with his sacred flesh. For some persons suggested to Nicetes, the father of Herod, and the brother of Alce,† to go to the proconsul, and entreat him not to deliver the body to the Christians, 'lest, said they, leaving the Crucified One, they should begin to worship him.' And they said these things upon the suggestions and arguments of the Jews, who also watched us, when we were going to take his body from the pile; unacquainted indeed with our views, namely, that it is not possible for us to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all who are saved of the human race, nor ever to worship any other.‡ For we adore HIM as being the Son of God; but we justly love the martyrs as disciples of the Lord, and followers of him, on account of that distinguished affection which they bore towards their King and their Teacher;—and may we be ranked at last in their number! The Centurion, perceiving the malevolence of the Jews, placed the body in the midst of the fire, and burnt it. Then we gathered up his bones,—more precious than gold and jewels,—and deposited them in a proper place; where, if it be possible, we shall meet, and the Lord will grant us, in gladness and joy, to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom, both in commemoration of those who have wrestled before us, and for the in-

* I see no ground for the well-known Papiastal inference hence usually drawn respecting the virtues ascribed to relics. To express an affectionate regard to the deceased by a decent attention to the funeral rights, is all that is necessarily meant by the expression.

† Alce is spoken of with honour in Ignatius's Epistle to the Smyrneans. She, it seems, had lived, in her nearest relations, inveterate foes to whatever she held dear.

‡ The faith of Christ, and a just honour paid to true Christians, abstracted from superstition and idolatry, appear in this passage.

* An officer, whose business it was in the Roman games to dispatch any beast that was unruly or dangerous.

struction and confirmation of those who come after.* Thus far concerning the blessed Polycarp.—Eleven brethren from Philadelphia suffered with him,—but he alone is particularly celebrated by all:—Even by Gentiles he is spoken of in every place. He was in truth, not only an illustrious teacher, but also an eminent martyr, whose martyrdom all desire to imitate, because it was regulated exactly by evangelical principles. For by patience he conquered the unjust magistrate; and thus receiving the crown of immortality, and exulting with Apostles and all the righteous, he glorifies God, even the Father, and blesses our Lord, even the Ruler of our bodies, and the Shepherd of his Church dispersed through the world.—You desired a full account; and we, for the present, have sent you, what will, perhaps, be thought a compendious one, by our brother Mark. When you have read it, send it to the brethren beyond you, that they also may glorify the Lord, who makes selections from his own servants of holy men, who shall thus honour him by their deaths. To him who is able to conduct us all by his grace and free mercy into his heavenly kingdom, by his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, to him be glory, honour, power, majesty, for ever. AMEN. Salute all the saints: those with us salute you, particularly Evaristus the writer, with all his house. Polycarp suffered martyrdom on the second day of the month Xanthicus, on the seventh day before the calends of March, on the great sabbath, at the eighth hour. He was apprehended by Herod, under Philip the Trallian Pontifex, Statius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ reigning for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, an eternal throne from age to age! We pray that you may be strong, brethren, walking in the word Jesus Christ, according to the Gospel, with whom be glory to God, even the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of his elected saints, among whom the blessed Polycarp hath suffered martyrdom, with whom may we be found in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, having followed his steps!

“These things Caius hath transcribed

from the copy of Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp, who also lived with Irenæus. And I Socrates of Corinth have transcribed from the copy of Caius. Grace be with you all. And I Pionius have transcribed from the fore-mentioned, having made search for it, and received the knowledge of it by a vision of Polycarp, as I shall show in what follows, collecting it when now almost obsolete. So may the Lord Jesus Christ gather me with his elect, to whom be glory with the Father and the Holy Spirit to the ages of ages. AMEN.”

I thought it not amiss for the English reader to see the manner in which books were then successively preserved in the church. Of Irenæus we shall hear more hereafter. Nor ought Pionius's account of his vision to be hastily slighted, by those who consider the scarcity of useful writings in those days. Whether the case was worthy of such a divine interposition, we, who indolently enjoy books without end, can scarcely be judges. However, if any choose to add this to the number of pious frauds, which certainly did once much abound, the authenticity of the account will still, in substance, remain unimpeached, as very near the whole of it is in Eusebius. This historian mentions Metrodorus, a presbyter of the sect of Marcion, who perished in the flames among others who suffered at Smyrna. It cannot be denied that heretics also have had their martyrs. Pride and obstinacy will in some minds persist even to death. But as all, who have been classed among heretics, have not been so in reality, Metrodorus might be a very different sort of a man from Marcion.

A comparative view of a sound Christian hero suffering as we have seen Polycarp did, with a Roman Stoic or untutored Indian undergoing afflictions, where we could have an opportunity of surveying all circumstances, might show, in a practical light, the peculiar genius and spirit of Christianity, and its divine superiority. At the same time, those who content themselves with a cold, speculative, and as they term it, rational religion, may ask themselves how it would have suited their principles to endure what Polycarp did;—and whether something of what is falsely called enthusiasm, and which the foregoing epistle breathes so abundantly, be not really divine and truly rational in the best sense.

* If we were in our times subject to such sufferings, I suspect these anniversary martyrdoms of antiquity might be thought useful to us also. The superstition of after-times appears not, I think, in this epistle.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MARTYRS OF LYONS AND VIENNE.

*THE flame of the persecution by Antoninus reached a country, which hitherto has afforded us no ecclesiastical materials; I mean that of France, in those times called Gallia. Two neighbouring cities, Vienne and Lyons, appear to have been much favoured with evangelical light and love. Vienne was an ancient Roman colony; Lyons was more modern, and her present bishop was Pothinus. His very name points him out to be a Grecian. Irenæus was a presbyter of Lyons, and seems to have been the author of the epistle which Eusebius has preserved, and which the reader shall see presently. Other names concerned in these events are evidently of Greek extraction, and it is hence most probable that some Asiatic Greeks had been the founders of these Churches. Whoever casts his eye on the map of France, and sees the situation of Lyons, at present the largest and most populous city in that kingdom, next to Paris, may observe how favourable the confluence of the Rhine and the Saône—anciently called the Arar—on which it stands, is for the purposes of commerce.† The navigation of the Mediterranean, in all probability, was conducted by merchants of Lyons and of Suvares; and, hence, the easy introduction of the Gospel from the latter place and from the other Asiatic churches is apparent. How much God hath blessed the work in France, the accounts of their sufferings will evince. Lyons and Vienne appear to be daughters, of whom their Asiatic mothers needed not to be ashamed.

THE EPISTLE OF THE CHURCHES OF VIENNE AND LYONS, TO THE BRETHREN IN ASIA AND PHRYGIA.‡

The servants of Christ, sojourning in Vienne and Lyons in France, to the brethren in Asia propria and Phrygia, who have the same faith and hope of redemption with us, peace, and grace, and

* Euseb. iv. c. 1.

† When will the moderns, notwithstanding all their enlightened views and improvements, learn to connect navigation and commerce with the propagation of the Gospel?

‡ Eusebius does not give the whole of the epistle at length, but omits some parts, and interrupts the thread of the narrative. It is not necessary to notice the particular instances.

glory from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

We are not competent to describe with accuracy, nor is it in our power to express the greatness of the affliction sustained here by the saints, the intense animosity of the heathen against them, and the complicated sufferings of the blessed martyrs. The grand enemy assaulted us with all his might; and by his first essays, exhibited intentions of exercising malice without limits and without control. He left no method untried to habituate his slaves to his bloody work, and to prepare them by previous exercises against the servants of God. Christians were absolutely prohibited from appearing in any houses except their own, in baths, in the market, or in any public place whatever. The grace of God however, fought for us, preserving the weak and exposing the strong; who, like pillars, were able to withstand him in patience, and to draw the whole fury of the wicked against themselves. These entered into the contest, and sustained every species of pain and reproach. What was heavy to others, to them was light, while they were hastening to Christ, evincing indeed, that THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME ARE NOT WORTHY TO BE COMPARED WITH THE GLORY THAT SHALL BE REVEALED IN US. The first trial was from the people at large; shouts, blows, the dragging of their bodies, the plundering of their goods, casting of stones, and the confining of them within their own houses, and all the indignities which may be expected from a fierce and outrageous multitude, these were magnanimously sustained. And now, being led into the Forum by the tribune and the magistrates, they were examined before all the people, whether they were Christians; and, on pleading guilty, were shut up in prison till the arrival of the governor.* Before him they were at length brought; and he treated us with great savageness of manners. The spirit of Vertius Epagathus, one of the brethren, was roused, a man full of charity both to God and man, whose conduct was so exemplary, though but a youth, that he might justly be compared to old Zacharias; for he walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord

* It is probable, but not quite certain, that this governor was Severus, afterwards emperor. The conduct of this governor was worthy of so humane a prince.

blameless, a man ever unwearied in acts of beneficence to his neighbours, full of zeal towards God, and fervent in spirit. He could not bear to see so manifest a perversion of justice; but, being moved with indignation, he demanded to be heard in behalf of the brethren, and pledged himself to prove that there was nothing atheistic or impious among them. Those about the tribunal shouted against him: He was a man of quality: and the governor, being vexed and irritated by so equitable a demand from such a person, only asked him if he were a Christian; and this he confessed in the most open manner:—the consequence was, that he was ranked among the martyrs. He was called, indeed, the Advocate of the Christians; but he had an advocate* within, the Holy Spirit more abundantly than Zacharias, which he demonstrated by the fulness of his charity, cheerfully laying down his life in defence of his brethren; for he was, and is still, a genuine disciple of Christ, following the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.† The rest began now to be distinguished. The capital martyrs appeared indeed ready for the contest, and discharged their part with all alacrity of mind. Others seemed not so ready; but rather, unexercised, and as yet weak, and unable to sustain the shock of such a contest: Of these, ten in number lapsed, whose case filled us with great and unmeasurable sorrow, and dejected the spirits of those who had not yet been apprehended, who, though they sustained all indignities, yet deserted not the martyrs in their distress. Then we were all much alarmed, because of the uncertain event of confession; not that we dreaded the torments with which we were threatened, but because we looked forward unto the end, and feared the danger of apostacy. Persons were now apprehended daily of such as were counted worthy to fill up the number of the lapsed, so that the most excellent were selected

from the two churches, even those by whose labour they had been founded and established.* There were seized at the same time some of our heathen servants,—for the governor had openly ordered us all to be sought for,—who, by the impulse of Satan, fearing the torments which they saw inflicted on the saints, at the suggestion of the soldiers, accused us of eating human flesh, and of various unnatural crimes, and of things not fit even to be mentioned or imagined, and such as ought not to be believed of mankind.† These things being divulged, all were incensed even to madness against us; so that if some were formerly more moderate on account of any connexions of blood, affinity, or friendship, they were then transported beyond all bounds with indignation. Now it was that our Lord's word was fulfilled, 'The time will come when, whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God service.'‡ The holy martyrs now sustained tortures which exceed the powers of description; Satan labouring, by means of these tortures, to extort something slanderous against Christianity. The whole fury of the multitude, the governor, and the soldiers, was spent in a particular manner on Sanctus of Vienne, the deacon; and on Maturus, a late convert indeed, but a magnanimous wrestler in spiritual things; and on Attalus of Pergamus, a man who had ever been the pillar and support of our church; § and, lastly, on Blandina, through whom Christ showed, that those things, that appear unsightly and contemptible among men, are most honourable in the presence of God, on account of love to his name, exhibited in real energy, and not in boasting and pompons pretences. For while we all feared; and among the rest while her mistress according to the flesh, who herself was one of the noble army of martyrs, dreaded that she would not be able to witness a good confession, because of the

* It is not easy to translate this, because of the ambiguous use of the term *Παρακλητος*, which signifies both a comforter and an advocate. Besides their only advocate in heaven, Jesus Christ, Christians have the comfort and power of his Spirit within.

† Every man who reads this must see the iniquity and absurdity of the governor! A term of reproach stands in the room of argument. The term Christian has long ceased to be infamous. But the words, Lollard, Puritan, Pietist, and Methodist, have supplied its place.

* Hence I judge that their churches were of no great antiquity.

† Hence we see again the usual charge of unnatural crimes objected to the Christians, believed in the paroxysm of the persecution, but afterwards generally disclaimed by sober persons.

‡ Surely they needed much the aid of the heavenly Comforter, promised in those discourses, to enable them to sustain the load of calumny so injurious and distressing.

§ A farther confirmation of the idea, that the Gospel had been brought into France by the charitable zeal of the Asiatic Christians.

weakness of her body, Blandina was endowed with so much fortitude, that those, who successively tortured her from morning to night, were quite worn out with fatigue, and owned themselves conquered and exhausted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to see her still breathing whilst her body was torn and laid open: they confessed that any single species of the torture would have been sufficient to despatch her, much more so great a variety as had been applied. But the blessed woman, as a generous wrestler, recovered fresh vigour in the act of confession; and it was an evident refreshment, support, and an annihilation of all her pains to say, "I am a Christian, and no evil is committed among us."

In the mean time Sanctus, having sustained in a manner more than human the most barbarous indignities, while the impious hoped to extort from him something injurious to the Gospel, through the duration and intenseness of his sufferings, resisted with so much firmness, that he would neither tell his own name, nor that of his nation or state, nor whether he was a freeman or slave; but to every interrogatory he answered in Latin, "I am a Christian." This, he repeatedly owned, was to him both name, and state, and race, and every thing; and nothing else could the heathen draw from him. Hence the indignation of the governor and of the torturers was fiercely levelled against this holy person, so that having exhausted all the usual methods of torture, they at last fixed brazen plates to the most tender parts of his body. These were made red hot for the purpose of searing him, and yet he remained upright and inflexible, and firm in his confession; being, no doubt, bedewed and refreshed by the heavenly fountain of the water of life which flows from Christ.* His body witnessed indeed the ghastly tortures which he had sustained, being one continued wound and bruise, altogether contracted, and no longer retaining the form of a human creature: In this man the view of Christ suffering wrought great marvels, con-

founded the adversary, and showed, for the encouragement of the rest, that nothing is to be feared where the love of the Father is; and that nothing is painful where the glory of Christ is exhibited. For, when after some days, the impious had renewed his tortures, and imagined that a fresh application of the same methods of punishment to his wounds, now swollen and inflamed, must either overcome his constancy, or, by despatching him on the spot, strike a terror into the rest, as he could not even bear to be touched by the hand, this was so far from being the case, that contrary to all expectation, his body recovered its natural position in the second course of torture; he was restored to his former shape and to the use of his limbs; so that, by the grace of Christ, this cruelty proved not a punishment, but a cure.

One of those who had denied Christ was Biblicas, a female. Satan, imagining that he had now devoured her, and desirous to augment her condemnation, by inducing her to accuse the Christians falsely, caused her to be led to the torture; and supposing her to be a weak and timorous creature, tempted her to charge us with horrid impieties. But in her torture she recovered herself, and awoke as out of a deep sleep, being admonished, by a temporary punishment, of the danger of eternal fire in hell; and, in opposition to the impious, she said, "How can we eat infants,—we, to whom it is not lawful to eat the blood of beasts."† And now she professed herself a Christian, and was added to the army of martyrs. The power of Christ, manifested in the patience of his people, had now exhausted the usual artifices of torment; and the devil was driven to new resources. Christians were thrust into the darkest and most noisome parts of the prison: their feet were distended in a wooden trunk, even to the fifth hole; and in this situation they suffered all the indignities which diabolical malice could inflict. Hence many of them were suffocated in prison, whom the Lord, showing forth his own glory, was pleased thus to take to himself. The rest, though afflicted to such a

* An illustrious testimony to the doctrine of the Spirit's influences, ever so much depreciated, but which was then the support of suffering Christians. The allusion is to St. John, 7th chapter, "He that believeth in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And this spake he of the Spirit."

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† Hence it appears that the eating of blood was not practised among the Christians of Lyons; and, that they understood not Christian liberty in this point, will not be wondered at by those who consider the circumstances of the first Christians.

degree as to seem scarcely capable of recovery under the kindest treatment, destitute as they were of all help and support, yet remained alive, strengthened by the Lord, and confirmed both in body and mind: and these encouraged and comforted the rest.

Some young persons who had been lately seized, and whose bodies had been unexercised with sufferings, unequal to the severity of the confinement, expired. The blessed Pothinus, bishop of Lyons, upwards of ninety years of age, and very infirm and asthmatic, yet strong in spirit, and panting after martyrdom, was dragged before the tribunal; his body was worn out indeed with age and disease, yet he retained a soul through which Christ might triumph. Borne by the soldiers to the tribunal, and attended by the magistrates and all the multitude, shouting against him as if he were Christ himself, he made a good confession. Being asked by the governor, who was the God of the Christians, he answered, If ye be worthy, ye shall know. He was then unmercifully dragged about, and suffered variety of ill treatment: those, who were near, insulted him with their hands and feet, without the least respect to his age; and those at a distance throw at him whatever came to hand: every one looked upon himself as deficient in zeal, if he did not insult him in some way or another. For thus they imagined they revenged the cause of their gods: He was thrown into prison almost breathless; and after two days expired.

And here appeared a remarkable dispensation of Providence, and the immense compassion of Jesus, rarely exhibited indeed among the brethren, but not foreign to the character of Christ. Many, who, when first apprehended, had denied their Saviour, were notwithstanding shut up in prison and suffered dreadful severities, as this denial of Christ had availed them not. But those, who confessed him, were imprisoned as Christians, abstracted from any other charge. Now the former, as murderers and incestuous wretches, were punished much more than the rest: Besides, the joy of martyrdom supported the latter, and the hope of the promises, and the love of Christ, and the Spirit of the Father. The former were oppressed with the pangs of guilt; so that, while they were dragged along, their very countenances distinguished them from the rest: but the faithful proceeded with cheerful

steps: Their countenances shone with much grace and glory: Their bonds were as the most beautiful ornaments, and they themselves looked as brides adorned with their richest array, breathing the fragrance of Christ so much, that some thought they had been literally perfumed. The others went on dejected, spiritless, and forlorn, and in every way disgraced, even insulted by the heathen as cowards and poltroons, and treated as murderers: they had lost the precious, the glorious, the soul-reviving appellation. The rest, observing these things, were confirmed in the faith, confessed without hesitation on their being apprehended, nor admitted the diabolical suggestion for a moment.

The martyrs were put to death in various ways: Or, in other words, they wore a chaplet of various odours and flowers, and presented it to the Father. In truth, it became the wisdom and goodness of God to appoint that his servants, after enduring a great and variegated contest, should, as victors, receive the great crown of immortality.—Maturus, Sanctus, Blandina, and Attalus, were led to the wild beasts into the amphitheatre, to the common spectacle of Gentile inhumanity.

One day extraordinary of the shows being afforded to the people on our account, Maturus and Sanctus again underwent various tortures in the amphitheatre, as if they had suffered nothing before. Thus were they treated like those wrestlers, who, having conquered several times already, were obliged afresh to contend with other conquerors by fresh lots, till some one was conqueror of the whole number, and as such was crowned. * Here they sustained again, as they were led to the amphitheatre, the blows usually inflicted on those who were condemned to wild beasts; they were exposed to be dragged and torn by the beasts, and to all the barbarities which the mad populace with shouts exacted, and above all to the hot iron chair, in which their bodies were roasted, and emitted a disgusting smell. Nor was this all: the persecutors raged still more, if possible, to overcome their patience. But not a word could be extorted from Sanctus, besides

* The allusions to the savage shows, so frequently made in this narrative, point out their frequency in these ferocious times; and give us occasion to reflect on the mild appearances which society has assumed, since even the form of Christianity has prevailed in the world.

what he first had uttered—the word of confession. These then after remaining alive a long time, expired at length, and became a spectacle to the world, equivalent to all the variety usual in the fates of gladiators.

Blasenna, suspended from a stake, was exposed as food to the wild beasts; she was seen **suspended in the form of a cross**, and employed in vehement supplication. The sight inspired the combatants with much alacrity, while they beheld with their bodily eyes, in the person of their sister, the figure of Him who was crucified for them, that he might persuade those who believe in him, that every one who suffers for the glory of Christ, always has communion with the living God. None of the beasts at that time touched her: she was taken down from the stake, thrown again into prison, and reserved for a future contest; that having overcome in various exercises, she might fully condemn the old serpent, and fire the brethren with a noble spirit of Christian emulation. Weak and contemptible as she might be deemed, yet when clothed with Christ, the mighty and invincible champion, she became victorious over the enemy in a variety of encounters, and was crowned with immortality.

Attalus also was vehemently demanded by the multitude; for he was a person of great reputation among us. He advanced in all the cheerfulness and serenity of a good conscience;—an experienced Christian, and ever ready and active in bearing testimony to the truth. He was led round the *amphitheatre*, and a tablet was carried before him, inscribed in Latin, “This is *Attalus* the Christian.” The rage of the people would have had him despatched immediately; but the governor understanding that he was a Roman, ordered him back to prison: and concerning him and others, who could plead the same privilege of Roman citizenship, he wrote to the emperor, and waited for his instructions.

The interval which this circumstance occasioned was not unfruitful to the Church.—The unbounded compassion of Christ appeared in the patience of many. * Dead members were restored to life by the means of the living; and the martyrs became singularly serviceable to the lapidated; and thus the Church rejoiced to receive her sons returning to her bosom;

for by these means most of those who had denied Christ were recovered, and dared to profess their Saviour: they felt again the divine life in their souls: they approached the tribunal; and their God, who willeth not the death of a sinner, being again precious to their souls, they desired a fresh opportunity of being interrogated by the governor.

*Cæsar** sent orders that the confessors of Christ should be put to death; and that the apostates from their divine Master should be dismissed.—It was now the general assembly, held annually at Lyons, and frequented from all parts; and this was the time when the Christian prisoners were again exposed to the populace. The governor again interrogated. Roman citizens had the privilege of dying by decollation; the rest were exposed to wild beasts; and now it was that our Redeemer was magnified in those who had apostatized. They were interrogated separate from the rest, as persons soon to be dismissed, and made a confession to the surprise of the Gentiles, and were added to the list of martyrs. A small number still remained in apostasy; but they were those who possessed not the least spark of divine faith, had not the least acquaintance with the riches of Christ in their souls, and had no fear of God before their eyes; whose life had brought reproach on Christianity, and had evidenced them to be the children of perdition;† but all the rest were added to the Church.

During their examination, a man who had lived many years in France, and was generally known for his love of God and zealous regard for divine truth, a person of apostolical endowments, a physician by profession, a Phrygian by nation, and named Alexander, stood near the tribunal, and by his gestures encouraged them to

* It must be confessed, that the power of Stoicism in hardening the heart was never more strongly illustrated than in the case of Marcus Antoninus; thus breaking all the ties of humanity. It puts me in mind of Mr. Pope's lines,

In lazy apathy let Stoics boast

Their virtue fix'd—'tis fix'd as in a frost.

† The difference between true and merely professing Christians is well stated, and deserves to be noticed. A season of persecution separates real believers and real experienced Christians from others, much more visibly than ministers can now do by the most judicious distinctions.

* Dead in their spiritual affections.

profess the faith. He appeared to all who surrounded the tribunal as one who travelled in much pain on their account. And now the multitude, incensed at the Christian integrity exhibited at the conclusion by the lapsed, made a clamour against Alexander as the cause of this change. Upon which the governor ordered him into his presence, and asked him who he was: He declared that he was a Christian: The former, in great wrath, condemned him instantly to the wild beasts;—and the next day he was introduced with Attalus. For the governor, willing to gratify the people, delivered Attalus again to the wild beasts; and these two underwent all the usual methods of torture in the amphitheatre; indeed they sustained a very grievous conflict, and at length expired. Alexander neither groined nor spake a word, but in his heart conversed with God. Attalus, sitting on the iron chair and being scorched; when the smell issued from him, said to the multitude in Latin, "This indeed which ye do is to devour men; but we devour not our fellow-creatures, nor practise any other wickedness." Being asked what is the name of God, he answered, "God has not a name as men have."

On the last day of the spectacles, Blandina was again introduced with Ponticus, a youth of fifteen: they had been daily brought in to see the punishment of the rest. They were ordered to swear by the idols; and the mob perceiving them to persevere immoveably, and to treat their menaces with superior contempt, were incensed; and no pity was shown either to the sex of the one or to the tender age of the other. Their tortures were now aggravated by all sorts of methods; and the whole round of barbarities was inflicted; but menaces and punishments were equally ineffectual. Ponticus, animated by his sister, who was observed by the heathen to strengthen and confirm him, after a magnanimous exertion of patience, yielded up the ghost.

And now the blessed Blandina, last of all, as a generous mother having exhorted her children, and sent them before

her victorious to the King, reviewing the whole series of their sufferings, hastened to undergo the same herself, rejoicing and triumphing in her exit, as if invited to a marriage supper, not going to be exposed to wild beasts.

After she had endured stripes, the tearing of the beasts, and the iron chair, she was enclosed in a net, and thrown to a bull: and having been tossed some time by the animal, and proving quite superior to her pains, through the influence of hope, and the realizing view of the objects of her faith and her fellowship with Christ, she at length breathed out her soul. Even her enemies confessed that no woman among them had ever suffered such and so great things. But their madness against the saints was not yet satiated. For the fierce and savage tribes of men, being instigated by the ferocious enemy of mankind, were not easily softened; and they now began another peculiar war against the bodies of the saints. That they had been conquered by their patience produced no stings of remorse: Indeed the feelings of common sense and humanity appear to have been extinguished among them: disappointment increased their fury: the devil, the governor, and the mob equally showed their malice; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," as well as, "He that is holy, let him be holy still."* They now exposed to dogs the bodies of those who had been suffocated in prison, and carefully watched night and day, lest any of our people should by stealth perform the funeral rites. And then exposing what had been left by the wild beasts or by the fire, relics partly torn, and partly scorched, and the heads with the trunks, they preserved them by military guards unburied for several days. Some gnashed on them with their teeth, desirous, if possible, to make them feel still more of their malice. Others laughed and insulted them, praising their own gods, and ascribing the vengeance inflicted on the martyrs to them. All, however, were not of this ferocious mould. Yet even those who were of a gentler spirit, and who sympathized with us, in some degree, upbraided us, often saying, "Where is your God,—and what profit do ye derive from their religion, which ye valued above life itself?"†

As for ourselves, our sorrow was greatly increased because we were deprived of

* Rev. xii. 11. A striking proof of the sacred regard paid to that divine work—the book of the Revelation,—in the second century.

† A diversity of temper or education produced a diversity of conduct among these men, while yet all seem to have been equally void of the fear and love of God.

the melancholy satisfaction of interring our friends. Neither the darkness of the night could befriend us, nor could we prevail by prayers or by price. They watched the bodies with unremitting vigilance, as if to deprive them of sepulchre was to them an object of great importance.—The bodies of the martyrs having been continuously treated and exposed for six days, were burnt and reduced to ashes, and scattered by the wicked into the Rhone, that not the least particle of them might appear on the earth any more. And they did these things as if they could prevail against God, and prevent their resurrection—and that they might deter others, as they said, from the hope of a future life,—“On which relying they introduce a strange and new religion, and despise the most excruciating tortures, and die with joy. Now let us see if they will rise again, and if their God can help them and deliver them out of our hands.”*

Eusebius observes here, that the reader may judge, by analogy, of the fierceness of this persecution in other parts of the empire, from this detail of the affairs at Lyons; and then adds something from the epistle concerning the humility, meekness, and charity of the martyrs; and thus he contrasts with the unrelenting spirit of the Novatians, which afterwards appeared in the Church. “They were such sincere followers of Christ, who, though he was in the form of a man, thought it not robbery to be equal with God,” that though elevated to such heights of glory, and though they had borne witness for Christ not once or thrice only, but often, in a variety of sufferings, yet they assumed not the venerable name of martyrs, nor permitted us to address them as such. But if any of us by letter or word gave them the title, they reprimanded us vehemently. For it was with much pleasure that they gave the appellation in a peculiar sense to Him who is the faithful and true witness, the first-born from the dead, and the Prince of divine life. And they remembered with respect the deceased martyrs,

and said; They indeed were martyrs whom Christ hath deigned to receive to himself in their confession, sealing their testimony by their exit; but we are low and mean professors. With tears they entreated the brethren to pray fervently for them, that they might be perfected.

They exhibited, however, in real facts, the energy of the character of martyrs, and answered with much boldness to the Gentiles: Their magnanimity, undaunted, calm, and intrepid, was visible to all the world, though the fear of God induced them to refuse the title of martyrs. They humbled themselves under the mighty hand by which they are now exalted.* They were ready to give a modest reason of the hope that was in them before all: They accused none: They took pleasure in commending, none in censuring; and they prayed for their murderers, as Stephen, the accomplished martyr did, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” And if he prayed thus for those who stoned him, how much more ought Christians to pray for the brethren!—They never gloried in an unbecoming way over the lapsed; but, on the contrary, they supplied their weaknesses with maternal tenderness, and shed many tears over them to the Father: they asked life for them, and he gave them it, which they were glad to communicate to their neighbours. Thus in all things they came off victorious before God,—ever cultivating peace,—ever commending peace:—In peace they went to God, leaving neither trouble to their mother the church, nor faction and sedition to the brethren; but joy, peace, unanimity, and charity.

Eusebius has given us another passage also which deserves attention. Alcibiades, one of the martyrs, had led, before the persecution, the life of an ascetic:—he used to subsist only on bread and water. As he continued the same regimen while in confinement, it was revealed in a vision to Attalus, after his first contest in the amphitheatre, that Alcibiades did ill not to use the creatures of God, and that he gave an occasion of scandal to others. Alcibiades was hence induced to change his diet, and to partake of the bounty of God with thanksgiving.—Eusebius tells us also of an epistle directed by these martyrs to Eleutherus, the bishop of Rome, in which they give a very honourable en-

* The natural enmity of the human mind against the things of God was never more strongly exemplified than in this persecution. The love of thinking to defeat the councils of God appears very conspicuous; and so does the faith and hope of a blessed resurrection, the peculiar animating theme of true Christians.

* 1 Pet. v.

comium of Irenæus the presbyter. Of him we shall have occasion to speak more hereafter. He was appointed successor to Pothinus; he outlived the storm, and governed the Church afterwards with much ability and success. The letter to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia, of which Eusebius has given such large and valuable extracts, furnishes strong proofs of his piety and judgment.

The superstitions, which afterwards arose in so great abundance, and with so much strength; and which, like a dense cloud, so long obscured the light of the Church, seem scarcely to have shaded the glory of those Gallic martyrs in any degree. The case of Alcibiades, and the wholesome check which the divine goodness put to his well-meant austerities, demonstrate that excesses of this nature had not yet gained any remarkable ascendancy in the Church. And the description of the humility and charity of the martyrs shows a spirit much superior to that which we shall have occasion, with regret, to notice in some succeeding annals of martyrdom. In a word, the power of Divine Grace appears little less than apostolical in the Church at Lyons. The only disagreeable circumstance in the whole narrative is the too florid and tumid style, peculiar to the Asiatic Greeks; and which Cicero, in his rhetorical works, so finely contrasts with the attic neatness and purity. In a translation it is scarcely possible to do justice to thoughts extremely evangelical and spiritual, clothed originally in so tawdry a garb. Yet under this great disadvantage a discerning eye will see much of the "unction" of real godliness.—At first sight we must be struck with the difference between primitive scriptural Christianity, and that affectation of rational divinity, which has so remarkably gained the ascendant in Christendom in our times. In the account we have read, the good influence of the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and the evil influence of Satan on the other, are brought forward every where to our view. In our times both are concealed, or almost annihilated; and little appears but what is merely human. Whether of the two methods is most agreeable to the plan of the sacred writings, must be obvious to every serious and honest inquirer.—Christ's kingdom, in the narrative before us, appears truly scriptural and divine: Christian faith, hope, and charity, do

their work under the direction of his Spirit: Christians are humble, meek, heavenly-minded, patient, sustained continually with aid invisible; and we see Satan actively, but unsuccessfully, engaged against them. In the degenerate representations of the Christian religion by many moderns, what a different taste and spirit!—Every thing is of this world!—Policy and ambition leave no room for the exhibition of the work of God and the power of the Holy Ghost: The belief of Satanic influence is ridiculed as weak superstition; and natural, unassisted reason, and the self-sufficiency of the human heart, triumph without measure!

CHAPTER VII.

THE STATE OF CHRISTIANS UNDER THE REIGNS OF COMMODUS, PERTINAX, AND JULIAN.—THE STORY OF PEREGRINUS.

THE reigns of the two last-mentioned emperors, which close the century, are short, and contain no Christian memoirs. That of Commodus is remarkable for the peace granted to the Church of Christ through the world.* The method which Divine Providence used for this purpose is still more so. Marcia, a woman of low rank, was the favourite concubine of this emperor. She had, on some account not now understood, a predilection for the Christians, and employed her interest with Commodus in their favour.† He was himself the most vicious and profligate of all mortals, though the son of the grave Marcus Antoninus. Those, who looked at secular objects and moral decorum alone, might regret the change of emperors. In one particular point only, namely, in his conduct towards the Christians, Commodus was more just and equitable than his father. And the power and goodness of God in making even such wretched characters as Commodus and Marcia, to stem the torrent of persecution, and to afford a breathing-time of twelve years under the son, after eighteen years of the most cruel sufferings under the father, deserve to be remarked. For certainly the Church of Christ has no communion with debauchees; and though it be abhorrent, also, in its plan and spirit from the systems of proud philosophers, yet it is always friendly to every thing

* Euseb. B. v. c. 19.

† Dion. Cassius.

virtuous and laudable in society.—The fact is, it has a taste peculiarly its own: God's ways are not like ours.—The Gospel now flourished abundantly; and many of the nobility of Rome, with their whole families, embraced it. Such a circumstance would naturally excite the envy of the great. The Roman senate felt its dignity defiled by innovations, which to them appeared to the last degree contemptible; and to this malignant source, I think, is to be ascribed the only instance of persecution in this reign.

Apollonius, at that time a person renowned for learning and philosophy in Rome, was a sincere Christian; and as such was accused by an informer before Perennis, a magistrate of considerable influence in the reign of Commodus. The law of Antoninus Pius had enacted grievous punishments against the accusers of Christians. One cannot suppose his edict had any force during the reign of his successor Marcus; but under Commodus it was revived; or rather, a new one, still more severe, was enacted, that the accusers should be put to death.* Perennis sentenced the accuser accordingly, and his legs were broken. Thus far he seems to have complied with the injunctions of the law: in what follows he obeyed the dictates of his own malice, or rather that of the senate. He begged of the prisoner with much earnestness, that he would give an account of his faith before the senate and the court. Apollonius complied, and delivered an apology for Christianity; in consequence of which, by a decree of the senate, he was beheaded. It is not quite easy to account for this procedure. It is perhaps the only trial recorded in history where both the accuser and the accused suffered judicially. Eusebius observes, that the laws were still in force, commanding Christians to be put to death, who had been presented before the tribunal. But Adrian, or certainly Antoninus Pius, had abrogated this iniquitous edict of Trajan. Under Marcus it might be revived,—as what severity against Christians was not to be expected from that cruel persecutor! Now Commodus, by menacing accusers with death, probably supposed he had sufficiently secured the Christians. Yet, if a formal abrogation of the law against Christians did not actually take place, one may see how Apollonius came to

suffer as well as his adversary. In truth, if he had been silent, it is very likely he would have saved his own life. Insidious artificers, under the pretence of much respect and desire of information, seem to have drawn him into a measure which cost him so dear:—He died, however, in the best of causes!

There is, in the work of Lucian, a remarkable story of a person named Peregrinus, which, as it falls in with this century, and throws light on the character of the Christians ^{Peregrinus} who then lived, deserves to be here introduced. "In his youth," says this author, "he fell into shameful crimes, for which he was near losing his life in Armenia and Asia. I will not dwell on those crimes; but I am persuaded that what I am about to say is worthy of attention. There is none of you but knows, that being chagrined because his father was still alive, after being upwards of sixty years of age, he strangled him. The rumour of so black a crime being spread abroad, he betrayed his guilt by flight. He wandered about in divers countries to conceal the place of his retreat, till, upon coming into Judea, he learnt the admirable doctrine of the Christians, by conversing with their priests and teachers. In a little time he showed them that they were but children compared to himself: for he became not only a prophet, but the head of their congregation: in a word, he was every thing to them: he explained their books, and composed several tracts himself; insomuch that they spoke of him sometimes as a god, and certainly considered him as a lawgiver and a ruler.—However, these people, in fact, adore that great person who had been crucified in Palestine, as being the first who taught men that religion.—While these things were going on, Peregrinus was apprehended and put in prison on account of his being a Christian. This disgrace loaded him with honour: it was the very thing he ardently desired: it made him more reputable among those of that persuasion, and furnished him with a power of performing wonders. The Christians, grievously afflicted at his confinement, used their utmost efforts to procure him his liberty; and as they saw they could not compass it, they provided abundantly for all his wants, and rendered him all imaginable services. There was seen, by the break of day, at the prison-gate, a com-

* Euseb. B. v. c. 19.

pany of old women, widows, and orphans, some of whom, after having corrupted the guard with money, passed the night with him. There they partook together of elegant repasts, and entertained one another with religious discourses. They called that excellent man the New Socrates. There came even Christians, deputed from many cities of Asia, to converse with him, to comfort him, and to bring him supplies of money ; for the care and diligence which the Christians exert in these junctures is incredible : they spare nothing in such cases. They sent, therefore, large sums to Peregrinus ; and his confinement was to him an occasion of amassing great riches ; for these poor creatures are firmly persuaded they shall one day enjoy immortal life : therefore they despise death with wonderful courage, and offer themselves voluntarily to punishment. Their first lawgiver has put it into their heads that they are all brethren. * Since they separated from us, they persevere in rejecting the gods of the Grecians, and in worshipping that deceiver who was crucified ; they regulate their manners and conduct by his laws ; they despise, therefore, all earthly possessions, and use them in common. Therefore if any magician, or juggler, any cunning fellow, who knows how to make his advantage of opportunity, happens to get into their society, he immediately grows rich ; because it is easy for a man of this sort to abuse the simplicity of these silly people. Peregrinus however was set at liberty by the president of Syria, who was a lover of philosophy and of its professors ; and who, having perceived that this man courted death out of vanity and a fondness of renown, released him, despising him too much to have a desire of inflicting capital punishment on him. Peregrinus returned into his own country, and as some were inclined to prosecute him on account of his parricide, he gave all his wealth to his fellow-citizens, who, being gained by this liberality, imposed silence on his accusers. He left his country a second time in order to travel, reckoning he should find every thing he wanted in the purses of the Christians, who were punctual in accompanying him wherever he went, and in supplying him with all things in abundance. He subsisted in this manner for a considerable time ; but having done something which the Christians abhor,—they saw him, I think, make use of some meats forbidden

amongst them,—he was abandoned by them ; inasmuch that having not any longer the means of support, he would fain have revoked the donation he had made to his country.”*

The native place of this extraordinary man was Parium in Mysia. After his renunciation of Christianity, he assumed the character of a philosopher. In that light he is mentioned by several heathen authors ; and this part he acted till the time of his death ; when, in his old age, he threw himself into the flames, probably because suicide was honourable in the eyes of the Gentiles, and because Empedocles, a brother philosopher, had thrown himself into the volcano at mount Etna.—A remark may here be made on the writer, on the hero, and on the Christians of those times.

It will not be necessary to give an anxious answer to the railleries, evils and insinuations of Lucian in this narrative. Whoever knows any thing of real Christianity, and the usual obloquy thrown upon it, will easily make just deductions, and separate what is true from what is false. Lucian was one of the most facetious authors of antiquity. He doubtless possessed the talents of wit and satire in a supreme degree. But truth and candour are not usually to be expected from writers of this sort. Lucian, like others of the same vein, had his eyes turned malignantly towards all objects but himself : He was intolerably self-conceited, and may be ranked with Voltaire, Rousseau, Hume, and other modern writers of that stamp : He was sarcastic, unfeeling ; and suspicious of evil every where, except in his own heart. The common consequence of such a temper, indulged without restraint, is a sceptical indifference to all sorts of religion, a contempt of every mode of it without distinction, and supercilious self-applause on account of superior discernment. Such men, of all others, seem most to fall under the censure of the wise man, HE THAT TRUSTETH HIS OWN HEART IS A FOOL. They take for granted the sincerity, humanity, and benevolence of their own hearts, with as much positiveness as they do the obliquity and hypocrisy of other men's. Antiquity had one Lucian ; and, it must be confessed the absurdities of paganism afforded him a large field of satire, which, eventually, was not

* Lardner's Collect. Vol. ii. c. 19.—Bullet's Establishment of Christianity.

unserviceable to the progress of Christianity: Our times have abounded with writers of this stamp; and it is one of the most striking characteristics of the depravity of modern taste, that they are so much read and esteemed.

Peregrinus is no very uncommon character. On a less extended scale, men of extreme wickedness in a similar way may frequently be noticed, viz. men, whose early life has been devoted to nothing but vices: Then, afterwards, something of the garb and mode of real Christians is assumed by these deceivers. But it is not every one who has the abilities of Peregrinus to wear the hypocritical garb so assumed with consummate address, and to impose on genuine Christians of undoubted discernment. The unfeeling heart of Lucian appears to rejoice in the impositions of Peregrinus; and particularly, that he was able to impose on Christians so long and so completely. A philanthropic mind would rather have been tempted to mourn over the depravity of human nature, that it should be capable of such wickedness. Providence, however, often sets a dismal mark upon such men in this life. Peregrinus lived long enough to be proved a complete impostor, and to be rendered intolerable to Christians; he acted the philosopher afterwards, it seems, a long time: for what is often called philosophy is consistent enough with much hypocrisy; and its dreadful end is awfully instructive to mankind.

Yet, what is there in all this account of the Christians, discoloured as it is by the malignant author, which does not tend to their honour? While Peregrinus made a creditable profession, they reserved and regarded in him: They did not pretend to infallibility. His superior parts and artifice enabled him a long time to deceive. It is probable that he avoided as much as possible the society of the most sagacious and penetrating among the Christians. The followers of Jesus had learnt to spare the mote in their brother's eye, and to feel the beam in their own. They were most solicitously guarded against that species of deception which is the most fatal, namely, the delusion of a man's own heart. If many of them were hence too much exposed to the snares of designing men, the thing tells surely to their honour, rather than to their disgrace. As for the rest; their liberality, their zeal, their compassion, their brotherly love,

their fortitude, their heavenly-mindedness, are confessed in all this narrative to have been exceedingly great. I rejoice to hear from the mouth of an enemy such a testimony to the character of Christians: it is one of the best which I can meet with in the second century: Amidst such a dearth of materials it was not to be omitted. In morals, Christians must then have been, at least, much superior to the rest of mankind; and it is only to be lamented, that he who could relate this story, had not the wisdom to make a profitable use of it for himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME ACCOUNT OF CHRISTIAN AUTHORS WHO FLOURISHED IN THIS CENTURY.

It may throw additional light on the history of Christian doctrine and manners in this century, to give a brief view of Christian authors. Some of the most renowned have been already spoken to, and a few more of great respectability must be deferred to the next century, because they outlived this.

Dionysius, bishop of Corinth, lived under the reign of Marcus Antoninus and his son Commodus. He wrote many epistles to various churches, Dionysius, which demonstrate his care and vigilance in support of Christianity;—a pleasing proof that Corinth was singularly favoured by being possessed of a zealous and charitable pastor; though of his labours there, and of the state of the numerous society of Christians under his ministry, we have no account. He wrote to the Lacedæmonians an instruction concerning the doctrine of the Gospel, and an exhortation to peace and unity. He wrote to the Athenians also; and, by his testimony, he confirms the account before given of their declension after the martyrdom of Publius; and of their revival under the care of Quadratus; and he here informs us that Dionysius the Areopagite was the first bishop of Athens. In his letter to the Christians in Crete, he highly commends Philip the bishop, and guards them against heresies. In his epistle to the churches of Pontus, he directs that all penitents should be received who return to the Church, whatever their past crimes have been, even if guilty of heresy itself. One may hence infer, that discipline was as yet adminis-

tered with much strictness in the churches; and that purity of doctrine, as well as of life and manners, were looked on as of high importance, inasmuch that some were inclined to a degree of rigour incompatible with the Gospel, which promises full and free forgiveness through Christ to every returning sinner, without limitations or exceptions. Such inferences concerning the manners and spirit of the Christians at that time seem obvious and natural: The present state of church-discipline among all denominations of Christians in England, would undoubtedly suggest very different reflections.—He writes also to Pinytus, bishop of the Gnossians in Crete, advising him not to impose on the Christians the heavy burden of the obligation to preserve their virginity, but to have respect to the weakness incident to most of them. It seemed worth while to mention this also as a proof that monastic austerities were beginning to appear in the Church; and that the best men, after the example of the Apostles, laboured to control them. Pinytus, in his reply, extols Dionysius, and exhorts him to afford his people more solid nourishment; lest, being always fed with milk, they should remain in a state of infancy. This answer speaks something of the depth of thought and knowledge in godliness, with which Pinytus was endowed.

In his letter to the Romans, directed to Soter their bishop, he recommends to them to continue a charitable custom, which, from their first plantation, they had always practised; namely,—to send relief to divers Churches throughout the world, and to assist particularly those who were condemned to the mines;—a strong proof both that the Roman church continued opulent and numerous, and also that they still partook much of the spirit of Christ.*

Theophilus of Antioch is a person of whom it were to be wished that we had a larger account. He was brought up a

Theophi-
lus. Gentile; was educated in all the knowledge then reputable in the world, and was doubtless a man of considerable parts and learning. His conversion to Christianity seems to have been the most reasonable thing imaginable. The Holy Spirit in his operations ever appears to adapt himself much to different tem-

pers. Theophilus was a reasoner; and the grace of God, while it convinced him of his own inability to clear up his doubts, effectually enlightened his understanding. The belief of a resurrection appears to have been a mighty impediment to his reception of the Gospel: It contradicted his philosophy.—The notions of proud philosophers vary in different ages; but they seldom fail in some form or other to withstand the religion of Jesus.

Of his labours in his bishopric of Antioch we have no account. He carried on a correspondence with a learned man named Autolytus; but with what success we are not told. He appears to have been very vigilant against fashionable heresies. He lived thirteen years in his bishopric; and died in peace about the second or third year of Commodus.*

Melito, bishop of Sardis, from the very little of his remains that are extant, may be conceived to be one whom God might make use of for the revival of godliness in that drooping Melito church. The very titles of

some of his works excite our regret for the loss of them. One of them is on the submission of the senses to faith: another on the soul, the body, and the spirit; another on God incarnate. A fragment of his, preserved by the author of the Chronicle, called the Alexandrian, says, "that the Christians do not adore insensible stones, but that they worship one God alone, who is before all things and in all things, and Jesus Christ who is God before all ages." He lived under the reign of Marcus Antoninus. His unsuccessful but masterly apology presented to that emperor has already been noticed. He travelled into the east on purpose to collect authentic ecclesiastic information; and he gives us a catalogue of the sacred books of the Old Testament. He died and was buried at Sardis; a man whom Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, his contemporary, calls an eunuch, that is, one who made himself an eunuch for the kingdom of heaven's sake.† Several such, I apprehend, were in the primitive times. But the depravity of human nature is ever pushing men into extremes. There soon arose some, who made a self-righteous use of these instances of self-denial; and clogged them with unwarrantable ex-

* Euseb. B. iv. c. 23. and Cave's Life of Theophilus.

† Matthew, xix. Euseb. B. iv. c. 25. Du Pin and Cave.

cesses. The contrary extreme is now so prevalent, that,—if a person were to follow the example of Melito on the same generous principles which our Saviour expresses,—it would be thought very extraordinary, and even ridiculous. But, whatever has the sanction of Holy Writ, should be noticed to the honour of those who practise it, whether agreeable to the taste of the age we live in or not, unless we mean to set up the eighteenth century as a sort of Pope, to judge the foregoing seventeen.—The same Polycrates observes of him, that his actions were regulated by the motions of the Holy Ghost; and that he lies interred at Sardis, where he expects the judgment and resurrection.

Bardasanes of Mesopotamia, a man renowned for learning and eloquence, escaped not the pollution of the fantastic heresy of Valentinian. His talents and his love of refinement were probably his snare; but, as he afterwards condemned the fabulous dreams by which he had been infatuated, and as he is allowed to be sound in the main, some relics of his former heresy might be left without materially injuring either his faith or his practice. I know no particular reason for mentioning him at all, but for the sake of introducing a remarkable passage of his writings, preserved by Eusebius,* which shows at once the great progress and the powerful energy of Christianity.

"In Parthia," says he, "polygamy is allowed and practised, but the Christians of Parthia practise it not. In Persia the same may be said with respect to incest. In Bactria and in Gaul the rights of matrimony are defiled with impunity. The Christians there act not thus. In truth, wherever they reside, they triumph in their practice over the worst of laws and the worst of customs." This eulogium is not more strong than just.—In what age did human inventions, whether philosophical or religious, produce such fruits as these?

Miltiades was usefully engaged in discriminating the genuine influences of the Holy Spirit from the fictitious,—of which Miltiades, unhappy instances had then appeared. False prophets evinced at first the most stupid ignorance, and afterwards a distempered imagination and furious frenzy. Miltiades showed

that the influence of the Holy Spirit described in Scripture, was sober, consistent, reasonable. There is no new thing under the sun: impostures and delusions exist at this day;—and why should it not be thought as reasonable now, as it was then, to discriminate genuine from fictitious or diabolical influences, by laying down the true marks and evidences of each, instead of scornfully treating all alike as enthusiastic? The extraordinary and miraculous influences chiefly come under Miltiades's inspection; for these were at that time very common in the Christian church; so were delusive pretences also; particularly those of Montanus and of his followers.—Let the discerning reader apply the observations to be made on these and similar facts to our own times.

Apollinaris of Hierapolis wrote several books under the reign of Marcus Antoninus. We have at present only their titles. One of them was a Defence of Christianity, dedicated to the emperor. The work of which we know the most, from a fragment preserved in Eusebius, is that against the Montanists, which will fall under our observation in the next chapter.

Athenagoras, towards the latter end of this century, wrote an Apology for the Christian Religion. His testimony to the doctrine of the Trinity, contained in that work, expresses something beyond a mere speculative belief. This article of the Christian faith appeared to him of essential consequence in practical godliness. He is a writer not mentioned by Eusebius. Du Pin does him injustice by observing that he recommends the worship of angels. I have not access to his Apology, but shall give a remarkable quotation from Dr. Waterland, to whom I am obliged for the only valuable information I have of this author.* Speaking of Christians, he describes them as "men that made small account of the present life, but were intent only upon contemplating God and knowing his Word, who is from him,—what union the Son has with the Father, what communion the Father has with the Son, what the Spirit is, and what the union and distinction are of such so united, the Spirit, the Son, and the Father."

* Euseb. Princ. Evang. Jortin's Remarks, iv.

* Epiphanius Heres. 54. l. See Dr. Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

If this be true,—and Athenagoras may well be credited for the fact,—it is not to be wondered at, that the primitive Christians were so anxiously tenacious of this doctrine. It was the climate in which alone Christian fruit could grow. Their speculations were not merely abstracted. They found in the view of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, something of that energy which could raise them from earth to heaven: That is, they found the peculiar truths of the Gospel, which are so closely interwoven with the doctrine of the Trinity. The right use of the doctrine is briefly, but strongly intimated in this passage;—and the connexion between Christian principles and practice appears. In truth, a Trinitarian speculatist may be as worldly-minded as any other person. His doctrine, however, contains that which only can make a man fix “his affections on things above.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE HERESIES AND CONTROVERSIES OF THIS CENTURY REVIEWED, AND AN IDEA OF THE STATE AND PROGRESS OF CHRISTIANITY DURING THE COURSE OF IT.

My plan calls me not to notice minutely all the heresies which appeared in this century; but I would not omit them, whenever they may throw light on the work of God's Holy Spirit and the progress of godliness.—On their own account, they deserved not much attention; yet it was necessary to examine and confute some of them; and Irenæus acted charitably in so doing. It is, however, to be regretted, that in his celebrated work against heresies, he should be obliged to employ so much time on scenes of nonsense.—Let it be remarked in general, that the same opposition to the Deity of Christ, or his manhood, and the same insidious methods of depreciating or abusing the doctrines of grace, continued in the second century, which had begun in the first, with this difference, that they were now multiplied, varied, complicated, and refined by endless subtleties and fancies, in which the poverty of taste and genius, so common in a period when letters are declining, discovers itself no less than the Christian doctrine. Like spots in the sun, however, they vanished and disappeared from time to time; though re-

vived again in different forms and circumstances. Not one of the heresiarchs of this century was able to create a strong and permanent interest; and it is no little proof of the continued goodness and grace of God to his Church, that the sound Christians still kept themselves separate and distinct, and preserved the purity of discipline.

It has often been said, that many have been enlisted among heretics, who were real Christians. When I see a proof of this, I shall take notice of it. But of the heretics of the second century, I fear, in general, no such favourable judgment ought to be passed. The state of Christian affairs, in truth, was such as to afford no probable reason for any real good man to dissent. Where was there more of piety and virtue to be found than among the general society of Christians? And how could any persons be more exposed to the cross of Christ than they were?

1. The first set of heretics of this century, were those who opposed or corrupted the doctrines of the person of Christ. A single quotation from Eusebius may be sufficient as a specimen.

Herety respecting the person of Christ.

Speaking of the books, which were published in these times, he observes,* “Among them there is found a volume written against the heresy of Artemon, which Paulus of Samosata in our days endeavoured to revive. When this book had confuted the said presumptuous heresy, which maintained Christ to be a mere man, and that this was an ancient opinion; after many leaves tending to the confutation of this blasphemous falsehood, the author writes thus: ‘They affirm that all our ancestors, even the Apostles themselves, were of that opinion, and taught the same with them, and that this their true doctrine was preached and embraced to the time of Victor, the thirteenth bishop of Rome after Peter, and was corrupted by his successor Zephyrinus. This might carry a plausible appearance of truth, were it not, in the first place, contradicted by the Holy Scriptures, and in the next, by the books of several persons, which they published long before the time of Victor, against the Gentiles, in the defence of the truth, and in confutation of the heresies of their times. I mean Justin, Miltiades, Tatian, and Clement, with

* B. v. c. 25.

many others; in all which works Christ is preached and published to be God.

Who knoweth not that the works of Irenæus, Melito, and all other Christians, do confess Christ to be both God and Man? In fine, how many psalms, and hymns, and canticles were written from the beginning by faithful Christians, which celebrate Christ, the Word of God, as no other than God indeed! How then is it possible, according to their report, that our ancestors, to the days of Victor, should have preached in that way, when the creed of the Church for so many years is pronounced as certain, and known to all the world! And ought they not to be ashamed to report such falsehoods of Victor, when they know it to be a fact, that this very Victor excommunicated Theodotus, a tanner, the father of this apostasy, who denied the divinity of Christ, because he first affirmed Christ to be only man. If Victor, as they report, had been of their blasphemous sentiments, how could he have excommunicated Theodotus the author of the heresy?

Victor's government was about the close of the second century. The anonymous author before us writes most probably in the former part of the third. Nor is his testimony much invalidated by his being anonymous. The facts to which he speaks were notorious and undeniable. We see hence, that all parties, notwithstanding the contempt, which some affect, of the testimony of antiquity and tradition, are glad to avail themselves of it where they can; which is itself a proof of the tacit consent of all mankind, that this testimony, though by no means decisive, nor such as ought ever to be put in competition with Scripture, yet weighs something, and ought not to be treated with unreserved disdain. In our own days the same attempt has been made in the same cause; with what probability of success, in the way of sound argument, let the reader, who has considered the passage I have quoted from Eusebius, judge for himself. In fact, it appears that a denial of the Deity of Christ could not find any patron within the pale of the Church for the first two hundred years. The prevalence of sentiments derogatory to the person and offices of Christ was reserved for a later period. Every person of any eminence in the Church for judgment and piety, holds unequivocally an opposite language.

In some of the most renowned we have

seen it all along in the course of this century.

This Theodotus was a citizen of Byzantium, a tanner, but a man of parts and learning. Heretical perversions of Scripture have often been invented by such persons. Pride and self-conceit seem to have a peculiar ascendancy over men who have acquired knowledge in private by their own industry: And doubtless one of the best advantages of public seminaries is this,—that modesty and reasonable submission are inculcated in them; and men, by seeing and feeling their own inferiority, are taught to think more lowly of their own attainments. This self-taught tanner speculated; felt himself important enough to be singular; and revived the heresy of Ebion. He was brought with some other Christians before persecuting magistrates: His companions honestly confessed Christ, and suffered: He was the only man of the company who denied him. In truth, he had no principles strong enough to induce him to bear the cross of Christ. Theodotus lived still a denier of Christ, and being afterwards upbraided for denying his God; "No," says he, "I have not denied God, but man; for Christ is no more."^{*} His heresy hence obtained a new name, that of the God-denying apostasy.† Persecution frequently does in this life, in part, what the last day will do completely,—separate wheat from tares!

2. The controversy respecting the proper time of the observation of Easter, which had been amicably adjusted between Polycarp of Smyrna and Anicetus of Rome, who had agreed to differ, was unhappily revived towards the close of this century: Synods were held concerning it; and an uniformity was attempted in vain throughout the Church. Victor of Rome, with much arrogance and temerity, as if he had felt the very soul of the future papacy formed in himself, inveighed against the Asiatic churches, and pronounced them excommunicated persons. The firmness, moderation, and charity of one man was of great service in quashing this dangerous contention. Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, rebuked the uncharitable spirit of Victor, reminded him of the union between Polycarp and his predecessor Anicetus, notwithstanding

Controversy respecting Easter.

* Damascene, *Heret.* 54.

† *Apostasy* *denying* *God*.

their difference of sentiment and practice in this point, and pressed the strong obligation of Christians to love and unity, though they might differ in smaller matters; and surely a smaller matter of diversity was scarcely ever known to occasion contention.

The particulars of the debate are not worthy of recital. Certain fundamentals being stated in the first place, in which all real Christians are united, they may safely be left, each society to follow its private judgment in other things; and, — surely, — yet hold the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But that this was effected with so much difficulty, and that so slight a subject should appear of so great moment at this time, seems no small proof that the power of true godliness had suffered some declension; and was an omen, towards the close of this century, of the decay of the happy effects of the first great Effusion of the Spirit. When faith and love are simple, strong, and eminently active, such subjects of debate are ever known to vanish like mists before the sun.

3. The Church was internally shaken and much disfigured by the heresy of Montanus. This is the account of it given by Apollinaris of Hierapolis, who took pains to confute it.*

Hersey of Montanus. "Being lately at Ancyra in Galatia, I found the Church throughout filled, — not with prophets, as they call them, but with false prophets; where, with the help of the Lord, I disputed publicly for many days against them, so that the Church rejoiced and was confirmed in the truth; and the adversaries were vexed and murmured. It originated in the following manner: There is a village in Mysia, a region of Phrygia, called Ardaba, where we are told that Montanus, a late convert in the time of Gratus, proconsul of Asia, gave advantage to Satan by being elated with ambition. The man behaved in a frantic manner, and pretended to prophesy. Some who heard him, checked him as a lunatic and forbade his public exhibitions, mindful of our Saviour's predictions and warnings against false prophets: but others boasted of him as endued with the Holy Ghost, and forgetting the divine admonitions, were so ensnared by his arts as to encourage the imposture. Two women were by Satan possessed of

the same spirit, and spake foolish and fanatical things. They gloried in their own supposed superior sanctity and happiness; and were deluded with the most flattering expectations. — Few of the Phrygians were seduced, though they took upon them to revile every Church under heaven which did not pay homage to their pretended inspirations. The faithful throughout Asia in frequent synods examined and condemned the heresy."

It has ever been one of the greatest trials to men really led by the Spirit of God, — besides the open opposition of the profane, — to be obliged to encounter the subtle devices of Satan, who often raises up pretended illuminations, and so connects them with delusion, folly, wickedness, and self-conceit, that they expose true godliness to the imputation of enthusiasm, and to contempt and disgrace. The marks of distinction are plain to minds which are serious and of tolerable judgment and discretion; but, men, void of the fear of God, will not distinguish. We see here an instance of what has often been repeated from that day to the present in the Church of Christ; and Christians should never fail to do now, what they then did, namely, they should examine, expose, condemn, and separate themselves from such delusions: The enthusiasts of every age follow the pattern of Montanus in folly, pride, and uncharitableness: Nothing happens here but what is foretold in Scripture: and in truth, delusions of this sort so generally accompany the real work of God, that wherever that appears, these very seldom fail to appear also.

4. But the eruptions of fanaticism are too wild and unnatural to remain long in any degree of strength. Whatever high pretensions they make to the influences of the Divine Spirit, they are ever unfavourable to them in reality; not only by their unholy tendency during the paroxysm of zeal, but much more so by the effects of contemptuous profaneness and incredulous scepticism which they leave behind them. It is for the sake of these chiefly that Satan seems to invent and support such delusions. — But his grand resource against the Gospel is drawn from contrivances more congenial with the nature of man. Human philosophy after the rudiments of the world and not after Christ, formed the last corruption of this century; which I shall lay open, to the best of my judgment, from the

* Euseb. B. C. 14.

lights of history. It was toward the close of the century that it made its appearance, nor were the effects of it very great at present: in the next century they appeared very distinctly.

Alexandria was at this time the most renowned seminary of learning. A sort of philosophers there appeared who called themselves Eclectics, because without tying themselves down to any one set of rules, they chose what they thought most agreeable to truth from different masters and sects. Their pretensions were specious; and while they preserved the appearance of candour, moderation, and dispassionate inquiry, they administered much food to the pride of men learning to their own understandings. Ammonius Saccas, a famous Alexandrian teacher, seems to have reduced the opinions of this sect to a system. Plato was his principal guide; but he invented many things of which Plato never dreamed. What his religious profession was is disputed among the learned. Undoubtedly he was educated a Christian; and though Porphyry, in his enmity against Christianity, observes that he forsook the Gospel and returned to Gentilism, yet the testimony of Eusebius,* who must have known, seems decisive to the contrary;—it proves, that he continued a Christian all his days: his tracts on the agreement of Moses and Jesus, and his harmony of the four Gospels, demonstrate that he desired to be considered as a Christian. This man fancied that all religions, vulgar and philosophical, Grecian and barbarous, Jewish and Gentile, meant the same thing at bottom. He undertook by allegorizing and subtilizing various fables and systems, to make up a coalition of all sects and religions; and, from his labours, continued by his disciples—some of whose works still remain,—his followers were taught to look on Jew, Philosopher, vulgar Pagan, and Christian, as all of the same creed.

Dr. Lardner, in opposition to Mosheim, who seems to have very successfully illustrated this matter, contends that there were no such motley-mixed characters, and that the scheme is chimerical. I have attended closely to Dr. Lardner's own account of this teacher; and also to his review of philosophers in the third and following centuries; and it appears to me, that persons of the class described

did actually exist. Ammonius himself seems to have been, if I may be allowed the expression, a Pagan-Christian. That Eusebius and Porphyry should each claim him for their own, is no little proof of his ambiguous character: and I wish we may not have too melancholy proofs of the same thing, when we come to consider the characters of many of the fathers who followed. Longinus, who was of the same school, though more a philologist than a philosopher, in his well-known respectful quotation from Moses, evinces that he was tinctured with a similar spirit. Plotinus is largely and fully in the same scheme. Who knows whether to call Ammianus the historian, and Chalcidius, Christian or Pagan? They affected to be both; or rather pretended that both meant the same thing; and in the fourth and fifth century, though some with Porphyry, through the virulence of their opposition, were decided enemies of Christ, it is certain that many ambiguous characters abounded among the Christians.

In truth, we see in every age similar scenes. The Gospel in its infancy has to struggle with the open and avowed enmity of all mankind. He, whose decisive power alone can do it, after floods of persecution and a thousand discouragements, gives his religion a settlement in the world too strongly to be overturned, as its enemies hoped at first would be the case. The light of divine truth falls not to make some impressions on minds by no means converted through it to God. Christianity, though it enforces its truths with much greater clearness than natural religion does; and though it proves its superiority, by exhibiting men who practise accordingly, still has many truths in common with natural religion: Thence ingenious persons are ready to persuade themselves, that their philosophy and the Gospel mean the same in substance: They compliment Christianity with some respectful attention, and yet studiously avoid the cross of Christ, and the precise peculiarities of the Gospel, in order to preserve their credit in the world. We may all have so much noticed this disposition in men, and the number of doubtful characters in consequence, that Mosheim's account cannot, I think, appear difficult of admission.

Undoubtedly the appearance of persons of this sort is a sure symptom that the Gospel is raised to some degree of emi-

* B. G. C. 18. Ec. Hist.

nence and stability in the world. In the first century such an ambiguous character would have been a rare phenomenon. Philosophers found no desire to coalesce with a religion contemptible in their eyes in all respects. It was not till numbers gave it some respectability, that a coalition of that kind took place. Seneca would have thought himself sufficiently liberal in not persecuting, but only despising the same religion, which Ammonius, a century afterwards, deigned to incorporate, in pretence at least, with his philosophy.—It has been observed, that the attempt of the court of Charles the First to draw over some of the parliamentary leaders to their interest, was a sure sign of the diminution of regal despotism. Satan beheld the decay of his empire of idolatry and philosophy in the same light; and it behooved him to try the same arts to preserve what remained. Melancholy and disastrous as was the evil we are contemplating, and even more decisively destructive to the progress of vital godliness than any other which had yet appeared, it was, however, an evidence of the victorious strength of the Gospel, and a confession of weakness on the part of paganism.

In carrying on these arts of seduction, the insidiousness of such middle characters consisted much in expatiating on the truths which lie in common, as of the greatest importance; and in reducing, as far as in them lay, the peculiar truths of the Gospel into oblivion. It was just in this manner, I remember, that a clergyman* speaks in a celebrated sermon preached on the accession of James the Second. While he deals out strains of fulsome adulation on the sovereign, he answers the objection against him drawn from his religion, by observing of what little importance opinions were; and that moral and practical matters were alone worthy of consideration. The conduct of James, in a little time after, showed the weakness of his reasoning: and the effects of this philosophical evil, which, like leaven, soon spread in some faint degree over the whole Church, manifested too plainly that pure and undefiled sentiments of religion are of high importance.

We have hitherto found it no hard matter to discover, in the teachers and writers of Christianity, the vital doc-

trines of Christ. We shall now perceive that the most precious truths of the Gospel begin to be less attended to, and less brought into view. Even Justin Martyr, before the period of eclectic corruption, by his fondness for Plato adulterated the Gospel in some degree, as we have observed particularly in the article of free-will. Tatian, his scholar, went bolder lengths, and deserved the name of heretic. He dealt largely in the merits of continence and chastity; and these virtues, pushed into extravagant excesses, under the notion of superior purity, became great engines of self-righteousness and superstition; obscured men's views of the faith of Christ, and darkened the whole face of Christianity. Under the fostering hand of Ammonius and his followers, this fictitious holiness, disguised under the appearance of eminent sanctity, was formed into a system; and it soon began to generate the worst of evils. That man is altogether fallen,—that he is to be justified wholly by the faith of Christ,—that his atonement and mediation alone procure us access to God and eternal life,—that holiness is the proper work of the Holy Spirit on the heart of man, and that for its production Divine Grace is absolutely necessary;—these,—and if there be any other similar evangelical truths,—as it was not possible to mix them with Platonism, faded gradually in the Church, and were at length partly denied and partly forgotten.*

St. Paul's caution against philosophy and vain deceit, it appears, was now fatally neglected by the Christians. False humility, "will-worship," curious and proud refinements, bodily austerities mixed with high self-righteous pretensions, ignorance of Christ and of the true life of faith in him, miserably superseded by ceremonies and superstitions,—all these things are divinely delineated in the second chapter to Colossians; and, so far as words can do it, the true defence against them is powerfully described and enforced.

Even the cultivation of the human mind, when carried on in the best manner, is

* N. B. The tenth article of our Church is remarkably precise and accurate on this subject. "We have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of Christ preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will."

* The Vicar of Newcastle.

apt to be abused by fallen man, to the perversion of the Gospel. Yet I would not place the mathematics and natural philosophy on the same footing as the Platonic or Stoical doctrines. In truth, philosophy is too respectable a name for these last: As they were managed in the school of Ammonius or of Antoninus, they displayed little that deserved the attention of a wise man: They were either romantic, or absolutely false. The philosophy of the moderns, when applied to abstract quantity, or to the works of nature, is, doubtless, possessed of truth and solidity, yet great care is requisite to keep even modern philosophy within its due bounds; and to prevent its encroachments on Christianity; and the danger of being elated by pride, and of being made too wise for the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, is common to this with all other sorts of secular knowledge. In regard to what is called moral philosophy and metaphysics, these seem much more nearly allied to the ancient philosophical evils, and have ever been dangerous to religion: fatal mistakes have been made through their means; and in general, if we except a very small portion of natural truths which are agreeable to the moral sense and conscience of mankind, they appear—at least, when conducted, as they have usually been, by un-evangelical persons,—to be the very same sort of mischievous speculation and refinement against which the Apostle to the Colossians speaks. Certainly his cautions against philosophy are equally applicable to them;—for they have been

found to militate against the vital truths of Christianity, and to corrupt the Gospel in our times as much as the cultivation of the more ancient philosophy corrupted it in early ages.—I would here be understood, in both cases, to refer to matter of fact, and not to imaginary suppositions.—In fact, the systems of the moral and metaphysical writers have rarely been founded on Christian principles, and yet they have pretended to incorporate themselves with the Gospel. The effect of such combination must ever prove mischievous, particularly when addressed to the reason of man, prejudiced by self-conceit and the love of sin.

And here we close the view of the second century; which, for the most part, exhibited proofs of divine grace as strong, or nearly so, as the first. We have seen the same unshaken and simple faith of Jesus, the same love of God and of the brethren; and,—that in which they singularly excelled modern Christians,—the same heavenly spirit and victory over the world. But a dark shade is enveloping these divine glories. The spirit of God is grieved already by the ambitious intrusions of self-righteousness, argumentative refinements, and Pharisaic pride; and though it be more common to represent the sensible decay of godliness as commencing a century later, to me it seems already begun. The surviving effects, however, of the first Effusion of the Spirit, and also the effects of some rich additional communications of the same Spirit, will appear in the third century.

CENTURY III.

CHAPTER I.

IRENÆUS.

BEFORE we proceed with the orderly course of events in this century, it may be convenient to continue the account of authors who properly belonged to the last, though they survived the conclusion of it. We meet with four celebrated characters of this description; Irenæus, Tertullian, Pantænus, and Clement of Alexandria.

Of Irenæus it were to be wished that we had a more copious account: The place of his birth is quite uncertain. His name, however, points him out to be a Grecian. His instructors in Christianity were Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, and the renowned Polycarp. The former is generally allowed to have been a man of real sanctity, but of slender capacity. He, as well as Polycarp, had been a disciple of St. John; and with all the imbecility of judgment which is ascribed to him, might, under God, have been of signal service to Irenæus. The instructions of Polycarp, however, seem to have made the deepest impressions on his mind from early life.

The church of Lyons, we have seen, was a daughter of the church of Smyrna, or of the other neighbouring churches. Pothinus, the bishop, must have been a Greek as well as Irenæus; who, as presbyter, assisted the venerable prelate in his old age. After the death

of Pothinus, about the year 169, Irenæus succeeded him. Never was any pastor more severely tried by a tempestuous scene. Violent persecution without, and subtle heresies within, called for the exertion, at once, of consummate dexterity and of magnanimous resolution. Irenæus was favoured with a large measure of both; and he weathered out the storm. But heresy proved a more constant enemy than persecution. The multiplication of it, in endless refinements, induced him to write his book against heresies, which must have been at that time a very seasonable work. His vigour and charity also in settling the insignificant disputes about Easter, as well as his share in writing the account of the

martyrdoms of Lyons, have already been mentioned.

The beginning of the third century was marked with the persecution under Septimus Severus, the successor of Julian. Severus himself had, most probably, directed the persecution at Lyons, in which Pothinus suffered; and when he began to persecute as emperor, he would naturally recall the idea of Lyons, and of the persecution in which he had had so large a share. Gregory of Tours, and the ancient martyrologists inform us, "that after several torments Irenæus was put to death, and together with him almost all the Christians of that populous city, whose numbers could not be reckoned, so that the streets of Lyons flowed with the blood of Christians." We may easily allow that this is a rhetorical exaggeration. Yet I see no reason with some to deny altogether the truth of this second persecution at Lyons, or of Irenæus suffering martyrdom under it. Gregory of Tours is not the best authority, but there is no circumstance of improbability here. The silence of Eusebius affords no argument to the contrary, because he is far from relating the deaths of all celebrated Christians. Of those in the West particularly, he is by no means copious in his narrative; and the natural cruelty of Severus, added to his former connexion with Lyons, gives to the fact a strong degree of credibility.

The labours of Irenæus in Gaul were doubtless of the most solid utility. Nor is it a small instance of the humility and charity of this great man,—accurately versed as he was in Grecian literature,—that he took pains to learn the barbarous dialect of Gaul, conformed himself to the rustic manners of an illiterate people, and renounced the politeness and elegant traits of his own country, for the love of souls! Rare fruit of Christian charity! and highly worthy the attention of pastors in an age like this, in which so many undertake to preach Christianity; and yet seem little desirous of distinguishing themselves in what peculiarly belongs to their office!

His book of heresies is nearly the whole of his writings that have escaped

the injuries of time. His assiduity and penetration are equally remarkable in analyzing and dissecting all the fanciful schemes with which heretics had disgraced the Christian name. It is easy to notice that his views of the Gospel are of the same cast as those of Justin,* whom he quotes, and with whose works he appears to have been acquainted. Like him he is silent, or nearly so, on the election of grace; which from the instructors of his early age he must often have heard; And, like him, he defends the Arminian notion of free-will; and by similar arguments.† His philosophy seems to have had its usual influence on the mind,—in darkening some truths of Scripture, and in mixing the doctrine of Christ with human inventions.

There is not much of pathetic, practical, or experimental religion in the work. The plan of the author, which led him to keep up a constant attention to speculative errors, afforded it no opportunities or incitements. Yet, there is every where so serious and grave a spirit, and now and then such displays of godliness, as show him very capable of writing what might have been singularly useful to the Church in all ages.

He makes a strong use of the argument of tradition in support of the apostolical doctrine against the novel heresies. His acquaintance with primitive Christians justified him in pressing this argument. The force of it, in a certain degree, is obvious, though the papists have perverted his declarations in favour of their own church. But what may not men pervert and abuse! The reasonable use of tradition, as a collateral proof of Christian doctrines, is not hence invalidated. What he observes here concerning the barbarous nations is remarkable.‡ —“If there were any doubt concerning the least article,—ought we not to have recourse to the most ancient churches where the Apostles lived? What—if the Apostles had left us no writings whatever? Ought we not to follow the tradition which they left with those to whom they committed the care of the churches? It is what several barbarous nations do, who believe in Jesus without paper or

ink, having the doctrine of salvation written on their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and faithfully keeping up to ancient tradition concerning one God the Creator and his Son Jesus Christ. Those, who have received this faith without Scripture, are barbarians as to their manner of speaking, compared with us; but as to their sentiments and behaviour, they are very wise and very acceptable to God; and they persevere in the practice of justice and charity. And if any one should preach to them in their language, what the heretics have invented, they would immediately stop their ears and flee afar off, and would not even hear those blasphemies.”

Thus it appears, that to the illiterate barbarians, tradition, though a poor substitute, supplied the place of the written word. We may not, however, suppose that their faith was blind and implicit. Our author gives a strong testimony to their godliness; and those of them who were taught indeed of God would have in themselves the strongest and most reasonable of all proofs of the divinity of their religion.—This is a valuable evidence of the Holy Spirit's influences, and of the native energy of divine truth on the hearts and lives of very illiterate men.

There is no new thing under the sun:—The artifices of the Valentinians in alluring men to their communion are specimens of the wiles of heretics in all ages.—“In public,” says Irenæus,* “they use alluring discourses, because of the common Christians, as they call those who wear the Christian name in general; and to entice them to come often, they pretend to preach like us: and they complain that, though their doctrine be the same as ours, we abstain from their communion, and call them heretics. When they have seduced any persons from the faith by their disputes, and made them willing to comply, they then begin to open their heretical mysteries.”

He doubtless agrees with all the primitive Christians in the doctrine of the Trinity: He makes use of the forty-fifth Psalm particularly to prove the Deity of Jesus Christ. He is no less clear and sound in his views of the incarnation:† and, in general, notwithstanding some philosophical adulterations, he certainly maintained all the essentials of the Gospel.

* B. 4. C. 14.

† B. 4. C. 72.—Quia in nobis sit, seems equivalent to Justin's *in nobis*.

‡ B. 3. C. 4.—See Fleury's Church History on the subject of the Works of the Fathers, Vol. 1. B. 4.

* B. 3. C. 15.

† C. 6. B. v. 15.

The use of the mystic union between the Godhead and manhood of Christ in the work of redemption; and, in general, the doctrine of the FALL and of the RECOVERY, are scarcely held out more instructively by any writer of antiquity. The learned reader, who has a taste for what is peculiarly Christian, will not be displeased to see a few quotations.*

"He united man to God: For if man had not overcome the adversary of man, the enemy could not, according to the plan of God's justice, have been effectually overcome.—And again, if God had not granted salvation, we should not have been put into firm possession of it; and if man had not been united to God, he could not have been a partaker of immortality. It behooved then the mediator between God and man, by his affinity with both, to bring both into agreement with each other."

"The Word of God, all powerful and perfect in righteousness, justly set himself against the apostasy, redeeming his own property from Satan, who had borne rule over us from the beginning, and had insatiably made rapine of what was not his own;—and this redemption was effected not by violence; but the Lord redeemed us with his own blood, and gave his life for our life, and his flesh for our flesh, and so effected our salvation."

He beautifully expresses our recovery in Christ.† "Our Lord would not have gathered together these things to himself, and have saved through himself in the end what had perished in the beginning through Adam, if he had not actually been made flesh and blood. He, therefore, had flesh and blood, not of a kind different from what men have; but he gathered into himself the very original creation of the Father, and sought that which was lost."‡

Undoubtedly the intelligent scriptural reader will recollect the divine reasoning of the author to the Hebrews to be very similar to all this. And those, who see how well the views of Irenæus are supported by him, will know how to judge of the opinions of those who call this scholastic theology, will see also how accurately the primitive fathers understood and maintained the doctrines now deemed

fanatical; and lastly, will observe the propriety of being zealous for Christian peculiarities.—Another short extract shall conclude this account of the book of heresies.

"The Word of God, Jesus Christ, on account of his immense love, became what we are, that he might make us what he is."§

Of the few fragments of this author, there is nothing that seems to deserve any peculiar attention, except that of an epistle to Florinus, whom he had known in early life, and of whom he had hoped better things than those into which he was afterwards seduced. "These doctrines," says he, "those who were presbyters before us,—those who had walked with the Apostles, did not deliver to you. For I saw you, when I was a boy, in the lower Asia, with Polycarp; and you were then, though a person of rank in the emperor's service, very desirous of being approved by him. I choose rather to mention things that happened at that time than facts of a later date. The instructions of our childhood grow with our growth, and adhere to us most closely, so that I can describe the very spot in which Polycarp sat and expounded, and his coming in and going out, and the very manner of his life, and the figure of his body, and the sermons which he preached to the multitude, and how he related to us his converse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord, how he mentioned their particular expressions, and what things he had heard from them of the Lord, and of his miracles and of his doctrine. As Polycarp had received from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, he told us as all things agreeable to the Scriptures. These things, then, through the mercy of God visiting me, I heard with seriousness; I wrote them not on paper, but on my heart; and ever since, through the grace of God, I retain a genuine remembrance of them, and I can witness before God, that if that blessed apostolical Presbyter had heard some of the doctrines which are now maintained, he would have cried out, and stopped his ears, and in his usual manner have said, 'O good God, to what times hast thou reserved me, that I should endure these things!' And he would immediately have fled from the place in which he had heard such doctrines."

* B. 3. 20.

† I. 5. C. 1.

‡ *Ανεκδιχνησιν*, Eph. 1. 10.—See Dr. Owen's Preface to his "*Χρησολογία*."

§ B. 5. C. 14.

• Book 5. Preface.

How superficially, in this age, which calls itself enlightened, numbers are content to think on religious matters, appears from the satisfaction with which two confused lines of a certain author, great indeed as a poet, but very ill-informed in religion, are constantly quoted :

For modes of faith let graceless zealots fight;
His can't be wrong, whose life is in the right.

Proud and self-sufficient men, to whom these lines appear full of oracular wisdom, may, if they please, pronounce Irenæus a "graceless zealot." But those in every age, to whom evangelical truth appears of real importance, will regret that so little of this zeal, "IN EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED TO THE SAINTS," discovers itself in our times :—They will regret, I say, this want of zeal, because they think it absolutely necessary to preserve practical as well as theoretical Christianity in the world.

CHAPTER II.

TERTULLIAN.

WE have not yet had any occasion to take notice of the state of Christianity in the Roman province of Africa. This whole region, once the scene of Carthaginian greatness, abounded with Christians in the second century, though of the manner of the introduction of the Gospel, and of the proceedings of its first planters we have no account. In the latter part of the second, and in the former part of the third century, there flourished at Carthage the famous Tertullian, the first Latin writer of the Church, whose works are come down to us. Yet, were it not for some light which he throws on the state of Christianity in his own times, he would scarcely deserve to be distinctly noticed. I have seldom seen so large a collection of tracts, all professedly on Christian subjects, containing so little matter of useful instruction. The very first tract in the volume, namely, that *de Pallio*, shows the littleness of his views. The dress of the Roman *Toga* offended him: He exhorted Christians to wear the *PALLIUM*, a more vulgar and rustic kind of garment, and therefore more becoming their religion. All his writings betray the same coarse, monastic, harsh, and severe turn of mind.—"Touch not, taste not, handle

not," might seem to have been the maxims of his religious conduct. The Apostle Paul, in the chapter alluded to, warns Christians against "will-worship and voluntary humility," and shows that while the flesh outwardly appears to be humbled, it is inwardly puffed up by these things, and induced to forsake the Head, Christ Jesus. This subtle spirit of self-righteousness may, in all likelihood, in Tertullian's time, have very much overspread the African church ;—otherwise, his writings would scarcely have rendered him so celebrated amongst them.

All his religious ideas seem tinged deeply with the same train of thinking: his treatise of Repentance is meagre and dismal throughout; and while it enlarges on outward things, and recommends prostration of our bodies before the priests, is very slight on the essential spirit of repentance itself.

A Christian soldier, who had refused to wear a crown of laurel which his commander had given him with the rest of his regiment, was punished for the disobedience, and was also blamed by the Christians of those times, because his conduct had a tendency to irritate needlessly the reigning powers. I am apt to think that he might have worn it as innocently as St. Paul committed himself to a ship whose sign was Castor and Pollux. It was a military ornament merely, and could no more be said to have any connexion with idolatry than almost every custom of civil life must have had at that time. The Apostle, I think, would have concurred in disapproving the soldier's want of obedience to his lawful superiors; and he might have referred Christians to his own determination in the case of eating things sacrificed to idols.—"Eat of such things as they set before you, asking no questions, for conscience' sake." But Tertullian decides on the other side of the question, and applauds the disobedience of the soldier. His reasons are dishonourable to his understanding. He owns that there is no scripture to be found against compliance in this case. Tradition, he thinks, a sufficient reason for contumacy; and then he proceeds to relate some traditional customs maintained in the African churches, among which the very frequent signing of themselves with the sign of the cross is one.

Superstition, it seems, had made deep inroads into Africa. It was rather an unpolished region;—certainly much in-

ferior to Italy in point of civilization. Satan's temptations are suited to tempers and situations. But surely it was not by superstitious practices that the glad tidings of salvation had been first introduced into Africa.—There must have been a deep decline.—One of the strongest proofs that the comparative value of the Christian religion in different countries is not to be estimated by their distance from the apostolic age, is deducible from the times of Tertullian.—If my life be spared, that I may proceed with this History, we shall see Africa exhibit a much more pleasing spectacle.

All this man's casuistical determinations savour of the same asperity. He approved not of flight in persecution,—in direct contradiction to our Saviour's determination.* He takes notice of a martyr named Rutilius; who, having fled several times from place to place to avoid persecution and save himself by money, was suddenly seized, and carried before the Governor, when he thought himself secure. He adds, that having undergone several previous torments, he finished his martyrdom by fire.

I would much rather quote Tertullian as an historian than a reasoner.—We may make useful reflections on this fact, without concerning ourselves with the inferences of the writer.

He disapproved also,—at least after his separation from the Church,—of second marriages, and called them *ADULTERY*. For as he does not appear to have been much acquainted with the depravity, misery, and imbecility of human nature, most of his precepts carry rather a stoical than a Christian appearance. He was, in his own disposition, doubtless a man of great natural fortitude; and most probably of great strength of body: He lived to an advanced age.—He seems not to have had any thing of that sympathy with the weak and timid, which forms so beautiful a part of the Christian character. The Church in general was not severe enough, according to his ideas of discipline; yet, it must be confessed, they were by no means wanting in that respect. In our licentious times, when sloth and dissipation,—the very opposite extremes to those which pleased the genius of Tertullian,—abound, all, who love the ways of Christ, regret that discipline is at so low an ebb.

The Montanists, whose austerities were extreme, and whose enthusiasm was real, seduced at length our severe African; and he not only joined them, but wrote in their defence, and treated the body of Christians, from whom he separated, with much contempt.—I have the satisfaction however, as yet, to find that the largest body of Christians, so called, was the soundest.

Tertullian, we are told, resented certain treatment which he met with from some Roman Christians. But of this I know no particulars; only, that an accident of this sort is said to have influenced his secession from the Church. Error, however, is very inconstant: He afterwards left the Montanists either entirely, or nearly so; and formed a sect of his own, called Tertullianists, who continued in Africa till Augustine's time, by whose labours their existence, as a distinct body, was brought to a close. The character of Tertullian is very strongly delineated by himself in his own writings; if there had been any thing peculiarly Christian, which he had learnt from the Montanists, his works must have shown it; but they are all of the same uniformly sable complexion: nor does he seem to have increased in any thing but in severity.

It is but an unpleasing picture which truth has obliged me to draw of this author. One agreeable circumstance, however, attending his history, is this:—It was not on account of any fundamental error in principle, that he left the Church. The faith of Christ, and the practice of real godliness, existed there, beyond doubt, to a much greater degree than amongst the heretics of those times, though it be allowed and hoped, as it ought to be, that some good persons might belong to them. The abilities of Tertullian, as an orator and a scholar, are far from being contemptible; and have, doubtless, given him a reputation to which he is by no means entitled on account of his theological knowledge. Yet the man appears always serious and earnest; and therefore, much more estimable than thousands who would take a pleasure in despising him, while they themselves are covered with profaneness. Nor is it for us, after all, to condemn a person, who certainly honoured Christ, defended several fundamental Christian doctrines, took large pains in supporting what he took to be true religion, and ever meant to

* Matthew x. 23.

serve God. He might even in his latter days, if not before, be favoured with that humbling and transforming knowledge of Christ which would fit him for the enjoyment of the kingdom of heaven.—Superstition and enthusiasm are compatible with real godliness: profaneness is not so.—It were to be wished, that those, who are most concerned in this remark, were more disposed to attend to it than they generally are.

In his treatise against Praxeas, he appears to have had very clear and sound views of the doctrine of the Trinity. He

Tertullian
against
Praxeas.

speaks of the Trinity in Unity, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, yet one God." He

speaks of the Lord Jesus as both God and man, son of man and son of God, and called Jesus Christ. He speaks also of the Holy Spirit, the comforter, the sanctifier of the faith of those who believe in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He observes, "that this rule of faith had obtained from the beginning of the Gospel, antecedent to any former heretics, much more to Praxeas, who was of yesterday." To those who know the primitive times I need not say, that Tertullian's own heresy lessens not the credibility of his testimony to these things. His Montanism altered not in the least his views of the Trinity.

The heresy of Praxeas consisted in making the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all one and the same: and this notion is no other than what has since been better known by the name of Sabellianism. In this way the distinction of persons in the Godhead is denied; and no doubt the mystery of the Trinity removed; but then what becomes of the divine Revelation itself?—All attempts to subvert the faith of Scripture on this subject, labour under the same error, namely, a desire to accommodate divine truths to our narrow reasoning faculties:—let men learn to submit; and on no account attempt to strip the almighty of his attribute of Incomprehensibility: Tertullian informs us that Praxeas first brought this evil from Asia into the Roman world; and that he seduced many; but at last was confuted and silenced by "an instrument" whom God pleased to make use of:—and the evil appeared to be eradicated.* Even Praxeas himself had the ingenuousness

to retract his mistake, and his hand-writing still remains among the natural men—so Tertullian calls the Christians in general from whom he had separated;—and he no more revived his heresy. Others revived it afterward, which occasioned the treatise from which I have extracted this brief account.

In his Apology, the eloquence and argumentative powers of our author appear most conspicuous. He refutes, in the

usual manner, the stale heathen calumnies of Christians feeding on infants. Their remarkable power over demons

Tertul-
lian's
Apology.

he states in the same manner as various of the fathers have done.—As a proof of the unity of the Godhead, he appeals to the consciences of mankind, and to a common practice, even among idolaters, founded on the supposition of one God. His description is remarkably striking—"What God hath given," "God sees it," and "I recommend to God," and "God will restore to me;" "These," says he, "are universal modes of speaking and of appealing to the one supreme. O testimony of the soul, naturally in favour of Christianity!—When men seriously pronounce these words, they look not to the Capitol at Rome, but to heaven above. For the soul knows the seat of the living God, whence it had its own origin."—I scarcely remember a finer observation made by any author in favour both of the natural voice of conscience and of the patriarchal tradition of true religion; for both may fairly be supposed concerned in the support of this practice. It shows how difficult it was for Satan to eradicate entirely every vestige of truth; and every classical reader may observe how common it is for the Pagan writers to speak of God as one, when they are most serious; and instantly to slide into the vulgar polytheism, when they begin to trifle.

This Apology exhibits a beautiful view of the manners and spirit of the Christians of his time; and shows what real Christianity does for men.—The following passages merit particular attention.—

"We pray," says he, "for the safety of the emperors to the eternal God, the true, the living God, whom emperors themselves would desire to be propitious to them above all others who are called gods. We, looking up to heaven, with outstretched hands because they are harmless, with naked heads because we are not ashamed, without a prompter be-

* A modest periphrasis, I apprehend, denoting Tertullian himself.

cause we pray from the heart, constantly pray for all emperors, that they may have a long life, a secure empire, a safe palace, strong armies, a faithful senate, a well-moralized people, a quiet state of the world,—whatever Caesar would wish for himself in his public and private capacity. I cannot solicit these things from any other than from Him from whom, I know, I shall obtain them, because he alone can do these things, and I am he who may expect them of him, being his servant who worship him alone, and am ready to lose my life for his service. Thus then let the claws of wild beasts pierce us, or their feet trample on us, while our hands are stretched out to God: let crosses suspend us, let fires consume us, let swords pierce our breasts,—a praying Christian is in a frame for enduring any thing. How is this—ye generous rulers?—Will ye kill the good subject who supplicates God for the emperor? Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to revenge the injuries which we sustain. But God forbid that his people should vindicate themselves by human fire; or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is evinced. Were we disposed to act the part, I will not say of secret assassins, but of open enemies, should we want forces and numbers? Are there not multitudes of us in every part of the world? It is true we are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your towns, cities, islands, castles, boroughs, counsels, camps, courts, palaces, senate, forum:—WE LEAVE YOU ONLY YOUR TEMPLES.—For what war should we not be ready and well prepared, even though unequal in numbers; we,—who die with so much pleasure, were it not that our religion requires us rather to suffer death than to inflict it?—If we were to make a general secession from your dominions, you would be astonished at your solitude.—We are dead to all ideas of worldly honour and dignity: nothing is more foreign to us than political concerns: The whole world is our republic.—We are a body united in one bond of religion, discipline, and hope. We meet in our assemblies for prayer. We are compelled to have recourse to the divine oracles for caution and recollection on all occasions. We nourish our faith by the word of God, we erect our hope, we fix our confidence, we strengthen our discipline, by repeatedly inculcating precepts, exhortations, corrections, and by excommunication,

when it is needful. This last, as being in the sight of God, is of great weight; and is a serious warning of the future judgment, if any one behave in so scandalous a manner as to be debarred from holy communion. Those who preside among us, are elderly persons, not distinguished for opulence, but worthiness of character. Every one pays something into the public chest once a month, or when he pleases, and according to his ability and inclination; for there is no compulsion. These gifts are, as it were, the deposits of piety. Hence we relieve and bury the needy, support orphans and decrepit persons, those who have suffered shipwreck, and those who, for the word of God, are condemned to the mines, or imprisonment. This very charity of ours has caused us to be noticed by some;—see, say they, how these Christians love one another!"

He afterwards takes notice of the extreme readiness with which Christians paid the taxes to the existing government, in opposition to the spirit of fraud and deceit, with which so many acted in these matters. But I must not enlarge;—the reader may form an idea of the purity, integrity, heavenly-mindedness, and passiveness under injuries, for which the first Christians were so justly renowned. The effect of that glorious effusion of the divine Spirit was the production of this meek and charitable conduct in external things: Every evidence that can be desired is given to evince the truth of this narrative:—The *confession of enemies unites here with the relations of friends.

I shall close the account of Tertullian with a few facts taken from his Address to Scapula, the persecuting governor, without any remarks.

Claudius Hermianus, in Cappadocia, was vexed because his wife was become a servant of Christ, and for that reason he treated the Christians cruelly.—Being eaten with worms, "Let no one," says he, "know it, lest the Christians rejoice." Afterward, convinced of his error in having, by force of torments, caused persons to abjure Christianity, he died almost a Christian himself.

At Thistrum, Cincius Severus himself taught Christians how to answer so as to obtain their dismission.

Asper, having moderately tortured a

* See the foregoing account of Peregrinus, page 127.

person and brought him to submit, would not compel him to sacrifice; and he made a public declaration among the advocates, "that he was grieved that he had any thing to do with such a cause."

The emperor Severus himself was, in one part of his life, kind to the Christians. Proculus, a Christian, had cured him of a disorder by the use of a certain oil; and he kept him in his palace to his death. This man was well known to Caracalla, the successor of Severus, whose nurse was a Christian. Even some persons of the highest quality, of both sexes, were openly commended and protected by Severus against the raging populace.

Anton Antoninus, in Asia, persecuted so violently, that all the Christians of the state presented themselves in a body: He ordered a few of them to be put to death, and dismissed the rest, saying, "If you wish to die, wretched men, ye may find precipices and halTERS."

CHAPTER III.

PANTENUS.

ONE of the most respectable cities within the precincts of the Roman empire was Alexandria, the metropolis of Egypt. Here the Gospel had been planted by St. Mark; and, from the considerable success which had attended it in most capital towns, it is probable that many persons were converted. But of the first pastors of this Church, and of the work of God among them, we have no account. Our more distinct information begins with what is evil. The Platonic philosophers ruled the taste of this city, which prided itself on its superior erudition. Ammonius Saccas had, as we have seen, reduced these thin notions of the learned into a system, which pretended to embrace all sorts of sentiments; and his successors, for several ages, followed his plan. We are told, that from St. Mark's time, a Christian catechetical school was supported in Alexandria. Whether it be so or not, Pantenus is the first master of it of whom we have any account. It should seem, from a passage of Eusebius,* that he was a Hebrew by descent. By tradition he had received the true doctrine from Peter, James, John,

and Paul; and, no doubt, he deserved this testimony of Eusebius, notwithstanding the unhappy mixture of philosophy which he imbibed in this region. For Pantenus was much addicted to the sect of the Stoics, a sort of romantic pretenders to perfection, which doctrine flattered human pride, but was, surely, ill adapted to our natural imbecility, and to scriptural views of innate depravity. The combination of Stoicism with Christianity in the system of Pantenus must have very much debased the sacred truths; and we may be assured that those who were disposed to follow implicitly the dictates of such an instructor, must have been furnished by him with a clouded light of the Gospel;—still, it is not improbable but that many of the simple and illiterate Christians might happily escape the infection, and preserve, unadulterated, the genuine simplicity of the faith of Christ:—The bait of reasoning pride lies more in the way of the learned; and, in all ages, they are more prone to be caught by it.

Pantenus always retained the title of The Stoic Philosopher, after he had been admitted to eminent employments in the Christian church.† For ten years he laboriously discharged the office of Catechist, and freely taught all that desired him: whereas the school of his predecessors had been more private.

Certain Indian ambassadors,—it is not easy to determine from what part of India they came,—intreated Demetrius, then bishop of Alexandria, to send them some worthy person to preach the faith of Jesus in their country. Pantenus was chosen; and the hardships he must have endured, were, doubtless, great. But there were at that time many Evangelists, who had the apostolical spirit to propagate the faith at the hazard of their lives. And, as Pantenus very freely complied with this call, we have here one of the best proofs of his being possessed of the spirit of the Gospel. His labours among ignorant Indians, where neither fame, nor ease, nor profit, were attainable, appear to me much more substantial proofs of his godliness, than any which can be drawn from his catechetical employments at Alexandria. The former would oblige him to attend chiefly to Christian fundamentals, and could afford little opportunity of indulging the philosophic spirit.

* B. 5. C. 10.

* Cave's Life of Pantenus.

† Euseb. B. 5. C. 9.

We are told he found in India the Gospel of St. Matthew, which had been carried thither by the Apostle Bartholemew, who had first preached amongst them.—I mention this, but much doubt the truth of it.—Of the particular success of his labours we have no account: He lived to return to Alexandria, and resumed his catechetical office. He died not long after the commencement of the third century. He wrote but little: Some commentaries on the Scriptures are all that are mentioned as his, and of them not a fragment remains.

Candour, I think, requires us to look on him as a sincere Christian,—whose fruitfulness was yet much checked by that very philosophy for which Eusebius so highly commends him.—A blasting wind it surely was; but it did not entirely destroy Christian vegetation in all whom it infected.—Let us now turn our eyes to his disciple from whom we may collect more clearly what the master was, because we have more evidence concerning him.—But the Christian reader must be prepared to expect a declension in divine things, in the state of the Church before us.

CHAPTER IV.

CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS.

HE was, by his own confession, a scholar of Pantenus, and of the same philosophical cast of mind. He was of the eclectic sect. It is sincerely to be regretted that Clemens had any acquaintance with them; for so far as he mixed their notions with Christianity, so far he tarnished it: and though we may admit, that by his zeal, activity, learning, and reputation, he did good to many in instructing and inducing them to receive the fundamentals of the divine religion, it is nevertheless not to be denied that he clouded the pure light of the Gospel:—Let us hear himself: “I espouse neither this nor that philosophy, neither the Stoic nor the Platonic, nor the Epicurean, nor that of Aristotle; but whatever any of these sects hath said, that is fit and just; whatever teaches righteousness with a divine and religious knowledge, all this I select; and call it philosophy.”

Is it not hence very evident, that from the time that this philosophizing spirit had entered into the Church through Justin, it

had procured to itself a respect to which its merits no way entitled it? For what is there even of good ethics in all the philosophers, which Clemens might not have learnt in the New Testament; and much more perfectly, and without the danger of pernicious adulterations? Doubtless many valuable purposes are answered by an acquaintance with these writers;—but to dictate to us in religion, Clemens should have known, was no part of *THEIR* business.—“The world by wisdom knew not God;”—“Beware of philosophy.” The Christian world was now gradually learning to neglect those Scriptural cautions, and divine knowledge is certainly much too high a term for any human doctrine whatever.

He succeeded his master Pantenus in the catechetical school, and under him were bred the famous Origen, Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, and other eminent men. I read the following passage of Clemens with no pleasure,—“As the husbandman first waters the soil, and then casts in his seed, so the notions which I derive out of the writings of the Gentiles serve first to water and soften the earthy parts of the soul, that the spiritual seed may be the better cast in, and take vital root in the minds of men.”

This, certainly, is not a Christian dialect: The Apostles neither placed Gentile philosophy in the foundation, nor believed that it would at all assist in raising the superstructure of Christianity. On the contrary, they looked on the philosophical religion of their own times, as so much rubbish; but, in all ages, the blandishments of mere reason on such subjects deceive us;—“VAIN MAN WOULD BE WISE.”

Besides his employments in the office of Catechist, he was made Presbyter in the Church of Alexandria. During the persecution under Severus, most probably he visited the East, and had a peculiar intimacy with Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, who seems to have been a holy man. This last suffered imprisonment for the faith; and in that situation he wrote a letter to the Church of Antioch, which was conveyed by Clemens. Something of the spirit of Christianity appears in the fragment of this letter. “Alexander, a servant of God, and a prisoner of Jesus Christ, to the blessed Church at Antioch, in the Lord, greeting. Our Lord has made my bonds, in this time of my imprisonment, light and easy to me; while I understood that Asclepiades, a person ad-

* Strom. L. i. See Cave's Life of Clemens.

mirably qualified by his eminency in the faith, was, by divine providence, become bishop of your holy Church of Antioch. These letters, brethren, I have sent to you by Clemens the blessed Presbyter, a man of approved integrity, whom ye both do know already and shall still farther know: He hath been here with us according to the good will of God, and hath much established and augmented the Church of Christ.* From Jerusalem Clemens went to Antioch, and afterwards returned to his charge at Alexandria.—The time of his death is uncertain.

The mystic philosophy, to which he was so much addicted, would naturally darken his views of some of the most precious truths of the Gospel. In particular, the doctrine of justification by faith in Jesus Christ will always suffer from a connexion of this kind: Human philosophical doctrines admit no righteousness but what is a man's own.—There is, notwithstanding, good proof of the solid piety of this learned man. Little is known of his life; but his religious taste and spirit may be collected from his writings.

His Exhortations* to the Gentiles is a discourse written to convert the Pagans from their religion and persuade them to embrace that of Jesus Christ. In the beginning of it he shows what a difference there is between the design of Jesus Christ, and that of Orpheus, and of those ancient mystics who were the authors of idolatry. "These captivated men by the sweetness of their music with a view of rendering them miserable slaves to idols; and of making them like the very beasts, the asses, the stags, which they adored;—whereas Jesus Christ, who, from all eternity, was the Word of God, always had a compassionate tenderness for men, and at last took their nature upon him, to free them from the slavery of Demons, to open the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf, to guide their paths in the way of righteousness, to deliver them from death and hell, and to bestow on them everlasting life, and to put them into a capacity of living a heavenly life here upon earth; and, lastly, God made himself man to teach man to be like unto God." He shows them, that eternal salvation cannot otherwise be expected, and that eternal torments cannot otherwise be avoided, than by believing in Jesus Christ, and by living conformably to his laws. "If you

were permitted," says he, "to purchase eternal salvation, what would you not give for it? And now you may obtain it by faith and love;—there is nothing can hinder you from acquiring it;—neither poverty, nor misery, nor old age, nor any state of life. Believe, therefore, in one God, who is God and man, and receive eternal salvation for a recompense.—Seek God, and ye shall live for ever."

The candid Christian sees that the fundamentals of the Gospel are actually here, though not laid down in the clearest and happiest manner. *In his *Pedagogue* he describes the WORD INCARNATE as the instructor of men; and says "that he performs his functions by forgiving our sins as he is God, and by instructing us as he is man, with great sweetness and love:—He equally instructs all sorts, because, in one sense, all are children: yet we must not look on Christian doctrines as childish and contemptible: on the contrary, the quality of CHILDREN, which we receive in baptism†—or regeneration,—renders us perfect in the knowledge of divine things, by delivering us from sins through grace, and by enlightening us with the illumination of faith; so that we are at the same time both children and men; and the milk with which we are nourished, being both the word and will of God, is very solid and substantial nourishment." These appear to be some of his best ideas of Christianity.

In his *Stromata* he speaks with his usual partiality in favour of philosophy, and shows the effect which his regard for it had on his own mind, by saying that **faith is God's gift, but so as to depend on our own free-will.** His account of the perfect Christian, whom he calls Gnosticus, is sullied by stoical diaphanities.‡—"He is never angry, and nothing affects him; because he always loves God: He looks upon that time as lost which he is obliged to spend in receiving nourishment: He is employed in continual and mental prayer. He is mild, affable, patient, but at the same time so

*Stromata
of Clem-
ens.*

* *De Fin.*

† The outward sign and the inward spiritual grace, on account of their usual connexion in the primitive church, are used as synonymous by a number of primitive writers, which has, unhappily, given occasion to one of the worst abuses, by those who place all grace in form and ceremony only.

‡ *Fleury, B. 4.*

rigid as not to be tempted: He gives way neither to pleasure nor to pain."

But enough of these views: Pseudo-religionists have since his time dealt largely in such reveries, so inconsistent with that humbling sense of imbecility, and that sincere conflict against the sin of our nature, which is peculiarly Christian. In truth—if his knowledge of Christian doctrine was really defective, the defect lay in his view of original sin. Of this his philosophical sect knew nothing aright; and it must be owned he speaks of it in a very confused, if not in a contradictory manner. On the whole,—such is the baneful effect of mixing things which will not incorporate,—human inventions with Christian truths,—that this writer, learned, laborious, and ingenious as he was, may seem to be far exceeded by many obscure and illiterate persons at this day, in true Scriptural knowledge and in the experience of divine things.—That he was, in the main, a truly pious person, neither makes this account less credible, nor the danger less of admitting the pestilent spirit of human self-sufficiency to dictate in the Christian religion.

CHAPTER V.

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGNS OF SEVERUS AND CARACALLA.

It seemed proper to prefix to the general history of the third century, the lives of the four persons, which we have reviewed; partly because they were studious men not very much connected with the public state of Christianity; and partly because the knowledge of their views and taste in religion may prepare the reader to expect that unhappy mixture of philosophical self-righteousness and superstition, which much clouded and depraved the pure light of the Gospel in this century.

Severus, though in his younger days a bitter persecutor of Christians at Lyons, was yet, through the influence of the kindness which he had received from Proculus, favourably disposed toward the Christians for a considerable time. It was not till about the tenth year of his reign, which falls in with the year two hundred and two, that

his native ferocity of temper brake out afresh, and kindled a very severe persecution against the Christians. He was just returned from the East victorious; and the pride of prosperity induced him to forbid the propagation of the Gospel. Christians still thought it right to obey God rather than man. Severus persisted; and exercised the usual cruelties. The persecution raged every where; but particularly at Alexandria. From various parts of Egypt the Christians were brought thither to suffer; and they expired in torments. Leonidas, father of the famous Origen, was beheaded; so easy a death however was esteemed a favour. His son was then very young; but the account, which is given of him by Eusebius,* deserves our notice.

Lætus was at that time governor of Alexandria and of the rest of Egypt; and Demetrius had been recently elected bishop of the Christians in that city. Great numbers now suffering martyrdom, young Origen panted for the honour and needlessly exposed himself to danger. His mother checked the imprudent zeal at first by earnest entreaties; but perceiving that he still was bent on suffering with his father, who at that time was closely confined, she very properly exercised her motherly authority by confining him to the house, and by hiding from him all his apparel. The vehement spirit of Origen prompted him, when he could do nothing else, to write a letter to his father, in which he thus exhorted him, "Father, faint not, and don't be concerned on our account." He had been carefully trained in the study of the Scriptures under the inspection of his pious father, who, together with the study of the liberal arts, had particularly superintended this most important part of education. Before he introduced his son to any material exercises in profane learning, he instructed him in the Scriptures, and gave him daily a certain task out of them to repeat. The penetrating genius of Origen led him, in the course of his employment, to investigate the sense of Scripture, and to ask his father questions beyond his ability to solve. The father checked his curiosity, reminded him of his imbecility, and admonished him to be content with the plain grammatical sense of Scripture, which obviously offered

* Euseb. B. vi. C. 1.

The 5th
Persecution of the
Christians.
By Severus,
A. D. 202.

itself;—but inwardly rejoiced, it seems, that God had given him such a son. And it would not have been amiss, if he had rejoiced with trembling;—perhaps he did so; and Origen's early loss of such a father, who probably, was more simple in Christian faith and piety than he himself ever was, might be an extreme disadvantage to him. Youths of great and uncommon parts, accompanied, as is generally the case, with much ambition and boundless curiosity, have often been the instruments of Satan in perverting divine truth; and it is not so much attended to as it ought to be by many truly pious and humble souls, that the superior eminence, in parts and good sense, of young persons whom they love and respect, is by no means a prognostic of the like superiority in real spiritual knowledge and the discernment of divine things. Men of genius, if they meet with encouragement, will be sure to distinguish themselves in whatever line of life they move. But men of genius and even of very remarkable endowments, though sincere in Christianity, may, not only in the practice, but even in the perception of Gospel-truths, be far outstripped by others who are naturally much their inferiors; because the latter are by no means so exposed to the crafts of Satan, are not so liable in their judgments to be warped from Christian simplicity, are more apt to look for understanding from above, and are less disposed to lean to an arm of flesh.

We seem to discover, in the very beginning of Origen, the foundation of that presumptuous spirit which led him afterwards to philosophize so dangerously in the Christian religion, and never to content himself with plain truth, but to hunt after something singular and extraordinary;—though it must be acknowledged his sincere desire of serving God appeared from early life; nor does it ever seem to have forsaken him, so that he may be considered as having been a child of God from early years.

His father dying a martyr, he was left, with his mother and other six children, an orphan aged seventeen years. His father's substance was confiscated by the emperor, and the family reduced to great distress. But Providence gave him a friend in a rich and godly matron, who yet supported in her house a certain person of Antioch, that was noted for heresy. We cannot at this distance of time

assign her motives; but Origen, though obliged to be in the company of the heretic, could not be prevailed on to join in prayer with him. He now vigorously applied himself to the improvement of his understanding; and having no more work at school,—it seems, because he soon acquired all the learning his master could give him,—and finding that the business of catechising was deserted at Alexandria because of the persecution, he undertook the work himself; and several Gentiles came to hear him and became his disciples. He was now in the eighteenth year of his age; and in the heat of the persecution he distinguished himself by his attachment to the martyrs, not only to those of his acquaintance, but in general to all who suffered for Christianity. He visited such of them as were fettered in deep dungeons and close imprisonment; and was present with them even after their condemnation, and boldly attended them to the place of execution: he openly embraced and saluted them; and was once in imminent danger of being stoned to death on this account. Indeed he was repeatedly in peril of his life; for the persecution daily prevailed; and he could no longer pass safely through the streets of Alexandria. He often changed his lodgings, but was every where pursued; and, humanly speaking, it seemed impossible for him to escape. His instructions, however, and his zeal, produced great effects; multitudes crowded to hear him; and were by his labours incited to attend to Christianity.

The charge of the school was now, by Demetrius the bishop, committed to him alone; and he converted it wholly into a school of religious information: He maintained himself by the sale of the profane books which he had been wont to study. Thus he lived many years, an amazing monument, at once both of industry and of self-denial. Not only the day, but the greater part of the night, was by him devoted to religious study; and he practised, with literal conscientiousness, our Lord's rules, of not having two coats, nor two pairs of shoes, and of not providing for futurity. He was inured to cold, nakedness, and poverty: He offended many by his unwillingness to receive their gratuities: He abstained from wine; and, in general, lived so abstemiously as to endanger his life. Many persons imitated his excessive austerities: and were, at that time, honoured with the name of

philosophers; and some of them patiently suffered martyrdom.

I state facts as I find them.—A strong spirit of self-righteousness, meeting with a secret ambition, too subtle to be perceived by him who is the dupe of it, and supported by a natural fortitude of mind, and by the active exertion of great talents, hath enabled many in external things to seem superior in piety to men of real humanity and self-diffidence, who penetrating more happily into the genius of the Gospel, by the exercise of faith in the Son of God, and that genuine charity which is its fruit, are led into a course of conduct less dazzling indeed, but much more agreeable to the Gospel. One cannot form a high idea of the solid judgment of these Alexandrian converts.—Were there none of the elder and more experienced Christians in that city, who were capable, with meekness of wisdom, of correcting the exuberances of this zealous youth, and of showing him that, by such a refusal of the comforts of life, he affected a superiority to Paul himself, who gratefully received the alms of the Philippians? Excesses of this sort must have been attended with great defects in inward vital godliness: The reader is again referred to the second chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, for a comment on the conduct of Origen. How much better had it been for him to have continued a scholar for some time longer; and not to have feasted the pride of the human heart by appointing him a teacher!—But the lively flow of genius seems to have been mistaken for great growth in Christian knowledge and piety.

One of his scholars, called Plutarch, was led to martyrdom. Origen accom-

Martyr-
dom. panied him to the place of execution. The odium of the

scholar's sufferings reflected on the master; and it was not without a peculiar providence that he escaped the vengeance of the citizens. After him Serenus suffered by fire: the third martyr was Heraclides; the fourth Heron. The former had not yet been baptized, being only what was called a Catechumen: the latter had been lately baptized; but both were beheaded. A second Serenus of the same school, having sustained great torments and much pain, was beheaded. A woman also, called Rais, as yet a Catechumen, suffered death. Potamiana, a young woman remarkable for beauty, purity of mind, and firmness

in the faith of Christ, suffered very dreadful torments: She was scourged very severely by the order of Aquila the judge, who threatened to deliver her to be abused by the basest characters. But she remained firm in the faith: was led to the fire, and burned together with her mother Marcella. The heart of Basilides, a soldier, who presided at her execution, was softened. He pitied her, treated her courteously, and protected her, so far as he durst, from the insolence of the mob. She acknowledged his kindness, thanked him, and promised that after her departure she would entreat the Lord for him. Scalding pitch was poured on her whole body, which she sustained in much patience. Sometime after, Basilides, being required by his fellow-soldiers to swear profanely on a certain occasion, he refused, and confessed himself a Christian. They disbelieved him at first; but finding him serious, they carried him before the judge, who remanded him to prison. The Christians visited him; and upon being questioned as to the cause of his sudden change, he declared that Potamiana, three days after her martyrdom, had appeared to him by night, and informed him that she had performed her promise; and that he should shortly die. After this he suffered martyrdom.

The reader will think this an extraordinary story: It is tinged with superstition, no doubt; but who can venture, without meriting the imputation of temerity, to reject it altogether as a fiction? Eusebius lived at no great distance from the time of Origen: He had made accurate inquiries after him and his followers in Alexandria; and he observes that the fame of Potamiana was in his own time very great in that province. Her martyrdom and that of the soldier seem sufficiently authentic. Her promise to pray for him after her departure only shows the gradual prevalence of fanatical philosophy, will-worship, and the like; and if the reader be not prepared by a sufficient degree of candour to admit the truth of authentic narratives and the reality of converting grace, because pitifully stained, in many instances, with such superstition, he will find little satisfaction in the evidences of Christian piety for many ages. But we are slaves to habit. In our own time we make great allowances in Christians for the love of the world: we are not so easily disposed to make allowances for superstitions. Yet many

wrong sentiments and views may be found where the heart is devoted, in faith and love, to God and his Christ. It will still be objected, that God would not sanction superstitions of this sort, by causing supernaturally the deceased spirit of a martyr to appear to Basilides.—I answer,—the supposition of a dream removes all the difficulty; and the more easily, when we recollect that the man's mind could not fail to have been previously under a strong impression of the person of the sufferer, of her late martyrdom, and of the circumstances which attended it.

A peculiar resolution made and put into execution about this time by Origen, illustrates his character in the strongest manner. Though disposed beyond most men to allegorize the Scriptures, in one passage he followed their literal sense too closely. "There are some who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."^{*}—We need not be at a loss for his motives. He was much conversant among women as a catechist and an expounder of the Scriptures;—and, no doubt, he was desirous of removing occasions for the slanders of infidels, as well as temptations from himself.—However he took all possible pains to conceal the fact.

One cannot but be astonished in noticing how strong the self-righteous maxims and views were grown in the Church;—yet still,—piety of principle, combined with fervour of zeal, must be revered by every one, who is not lost to all sense of goodness.—The extraordinary step taken by Origen, above alluded to, could not remain a secret. Demetrius, his bishop, at first censured and commended him; afterwards,† though the power of envy, on account of his growing popularity, he published the fact abroad with a view to disgrace him. However, the bishops of Caesarea and Jerusalem protested and supported him, and ordained him a presbyter in the church. Day and night he continued still to labour at Alexandria. But it is time to turn from Alexandria to other parts of the Roman empire; and to see what effects were produced by this same persecution of Severus.

Alexander, a bishop in Cappadocia, confessed the faith of Christ, and sustained a variety of sufferings; and yet by the providence of God was at length de-

livered:—and he travelled afterwards to Jerusalem. There he was joyfully received by Narcissus the very aged bishop of that see, a man of extraordinary piety, who associated Alexander with him in the labours of Christian instruction. Some epistles of the latter were extant in Eusebius's time, who gives us a short fragment of one of them, sufficiently authenticating the fact,—that those two holy men were joint pastors of Jerusalem.

"Narcissus greets you, who governed this bishopric before me; and now being an hundred and sixteen years old, prayeth with me, and that very seriously, for the state of the church, and beseeches you to be of one mind with me."

If the ancient martyrologies had been preserved uncorrupted, they would, doubtless, afford us useful materials, and illustrate much the spirit and genius of real Christianity in its primitive professors. But frauds, interpolations, and impostures, are endless: The papal and monastic superstitions, in after-ages, induced their supporters to corrupt these martyrologies, and indeed the writings of the fathers in general. The difficulty of procuring materials for a well-connected credible history of real Christians, is hence increased exceedingly. What I cannot believe, I shall not take the trouble to transcribe; what I can, where the matter appears worthy of memory, shall be exhibited. This is the case of the martyrs of Scillita, a city of Africa, in the province of Carthage. The narration is simple, credible throughout, and worthy of the purest ages of the Gospel.—The facts belong to the times of Severus.

"Twelve persons were brought before Saturninus the proconsul at Carthage, the chief of whom were Speratus, Narzal, and Cutin; and three women, Donata, Secunda, and Vestina. When they came before him, he said to them all, 'You may expect the emperor our master's pardon, if you return to your senses, and observe the ceremonies of our gods.' To which Speratus replied, 'We have never been guilty of any thing that is evil, nor been partakers of injustice: We have even prayed for those who persecute us unjustly; in which we obey our nation, who prescribed to us this rule of behaviour.' Saturninus answered, 'We have also a religion that is simple: We swear by the genius of the emperors, and we offer up vows for their health, which you

^{*} Matthew xix. 12. † Euseb. B. vi. C. 7.

ought also to do.' Speratus answered, 'If you will hear me patiently, I will declare unto you the mystery of Christian simplicity.' The proconsul said, 'Shall I hear you speak ill of our ceremonies? Rather swear, all of you, by the genius of the emperors our masters, that you may enjoy the pleasures of life.' Speratus answered, 'I know not the genius of the emperors. I serve God, who is in heaven, whom no man hath seen, nor can see. I have never been guilty of any crime punishable by the public laws: if I buy any thing, I pay the duties to the collectors: I acknowledge my God and Saviour to be the Supreme Governor of all nations: I have made no complaints against any person; and therefore they ought to make none against me.' The proconsul, turning to the rest, said, 'Do not ye imitate the folly of this mad wretch; but rather fear our prince and obey his commands.' Cittin answered, 'We fear only the Lord our God, who is in heaven.' The proconsul then said, 'Let them be carried to prison, and put in fetters till to-morrow.'

"The next day the proconsul, seated on his tribunal, caused them to be brought before them, and said to the women,— 'Honour our prince, and do sacrifice to the gods.' Donata replied, 'We honour Cæsar as Cæsar, but to God we offer prayer and worship.' Vestina said, 'I also am a Christian.' Secunda said, 'I also believe in my God, and will continue steadfast to him; and, in regard to your gods, we will not serve and adore them.' The proconsul ordered them to be separated; then, having called for the men, he said to Speratus, 'Perseverest thou in being a Christian?' Speratus answered, 'Yes, I do persevere:—Let all give ear, I am a Christian;' which being heard by the rest, they said, 'We also are Christians.' The proconsul said, 'You will neither consider your danger, nor receive mercy.' They replied, 'Do what you please, we shall die joyfully for the sake of Jesus Christ.' The proconsul asked, 'What books are those which you read and revere?' Speratus replied, 'The four Gospels of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; the Epistles of the Apostle St. Paul, and all the Scripture that is inspired of God.' The proconsul said, 'I will give you three days to reflect and to come to yourselves.' Upon which Speratus answered, 'I am a Christian, and such are all those who are with me: and we

will never quit the faith of our Lord Jesus. Do, therefore, what you think fit.'

"The proconsul, seeing their resolution, pronounced sentence against them,—that they should die by the hands of the executioner, in these terms:— 'Speratus and the rest, having acknowledged themselves to be Christians, and having refused to pay due honour to the emperor, I command their heads to be cut off.' This sentence having been read, Speratus and his fellow-sufferers said, 'We give thanks to God, who honoureth us this day with being received as martyrs in heaven, for confessing his name.' They were carried to the place of punishment, where they fell on their knees all together, and having again given thanks to Jesus Christ, they were beheaded."

{At Carthage itself four young Catechumens were seized, Revocatus and Felicitas,—slaves to the same master,—with Saturninus and Secundulus; and also Vivia Perpetua, a lady of quality. She had a father, a mother, and two brothers, of whom one was a catechumen; she was about twenty-two years of age; was married, and was then pregnant; and moreover, she had a young child at her breast. To these five, by an excess of zeal too common at that time, Satur, voluntarily, joined himself. While they were in the hands of the persecutors, the father of Perpetua, himself a Pagan, but full of affection to his favourite offspring, importuned her to fall from the faith. His intreaties were vain. Her pious constancy appeared to him an absurd obstinacy, and enraged him so much as to induce him to give her very rough treatment. For a few days while these catechumens were under guard, but not confined in the prison, they found means to be baptised; and Perpetua's prayers were directed particularly for patience under bodily pains. They were then put into a dark prison. To the rest, who had been more accustomed to hardships, this change of scene had not any thing in it very terrible. To her, who had experienced nothing but the delicacies of genteel life, it was peculiarly formidable and distressing: Her concern for her infant was extreme.—Tertius and Pomponius, two deacons of the Church, obtained by money, that the prisoners might go out of the dark dungeon, and for some hours refresh themselves in a more commodious place, where Perpe-

tua gave the breast to her infant, and then recommended him carefully to her mother. For some time her mind was oppressed with concern for the misery she had brought on her family; though it was for the sake of a good conscience; but she grew more composed, and her prison became a palace.

Her father, sometime after, came to the prison overwhelmed with grief; which, in all probability, was augmented by the reflections he had made on his own rough and angry behaviour to her at their last interview. "Have pity, my daughter," says he, "on my gray hairs; have pity on your father, if I was ever worthy of that name: if I myself have brought you up to this age; if I have preferred you to all your brethren, make me not a reproach to mankind: respect your father and your aunt"—these, it seems, were joined in the interests of paganism, while the mother appears to have been a Christian, otherwise his silence concerning her seems scarcely to be accounted for;—"have compassion on your son, who cannot survive your lay aside your obstinacy, lest you destroy us all: for if you perish we must all of us shut our mouths in disgrace." The old gentleman, with much tenderness, kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, weeping and calling her no longer his daughter, but his mistress—the mistress of his fate! He was the only person of the family who did not rejoice at her martyrdom. Perpetua, though inwardly torn with filial affection, could offer him no other comfort than to desire him to acquiesce in the Divine disposal.

The next day they were all brought into the court, and examined in the presence of vast crowds. There the unhappy old man appeared with his little grandson, and taking Perpetua aside, conjured her to have some pity on her child. The prosecutor, Hilarian, joined in the suit, but in vain. The old man then attempted to draw his daughter from the scaffold. Hilarian ordered him to be beaten; and a blow, which he received with a staff, was felt by Perpetua very severely.

Hilarian condemned them to be exposed to the wild beasts. They then returned cheerfully to their prison. Perpetua sent the deacon, Pomponius, to demand her child of her father, which he refused to return. The health of the child, we are told, suffered not; nor did Perpetua feel any bodily inconvenience.

Secundulus died in prison. Felicitas

was eight months gone with child; and seeing the day of the public shows to be near, she was much afflicted lest her execution should take place before her delivery. Her companions joined in prayer for her three days before the spectacles; and she was, with great difficulty, delivered of a child. One of the doorkeepers, who, perhaps, expected to have found in her a stoical insensibility, and heard her cries, said, "Do you complain of this? what will you do when you are exposed to the beasts?" Felicitas answered, with a sagacity truly Christian, "It is I that suffer now, but then there will be another with me, that will suffer for me, because I shall suffer for his sake."—Her new-born daughter was delivered to a Christian woman, who nursed it as her own.

The tribune appears to have credited a report, that the prisoners would free themselves by magical practices; and in consequence, to have treated them roughly. "Why don't you," says Perpetua, "give us some relief?" Will it not be for your honour that we should appear well fed at the spectacles?

This address of hers had the desired effect: It procured a very agreeable alteration in their treatment. On the day before the shows, they were supplied with their last meal; and the martyrs did their utmost to convert it into an *agape*: they ate in public: their brethren and others were allowed to visit them: and the keeper of the prison himself, by this time, was converted to the faith: they talked to the people, and warned them to flee from the wrath to come: they pointed out to them their own happy lot, and smiled at the curiosity of those who ran to see them. "Observe well our faces," cries Sater, with much animation, "that ye may know them at the day of judgment."

The Spirit of God was much with them on the day of trial: joy, rather than fear, was painted on their looks. Perpetua, cherished by Jesus Christ, went on with a composed countenance and an easy pace, holding down her eyes, lest the spectators might draw wrong conclusions from their vivacity. Some idolatrous garments were offered them by the Pagans: "We sacrifice our lives," said they, "to avoid every thing of this kind."—The tribune desisted from his demand.

Perpetua sang, as already victorious:

and Revocatus, Saturninus, and Satur, endeavoured to affect the people with the fear of the wrath to come. Being come into Hilarian's presence, "Thou judgest us," said they, "and God shall judge thee." The mob was enraged, and insisted on their being scourged before they were exposed to the beasts. It was done, and the martyrs rejoiced in being conformed to their Saviour's sufferings.

Perpetua and Felicitas were stripped, and put into the nets, and exposed to a wild cow. The spectators were shocked at the sight: for the one was an accomplished beauty, and the other had been recently delivered of a child.—The assisting executioner drew them back and covered them with loose garments. Perpetua was first attacked; and falling backwards she put herself into a reclining posture; and seeing her habit torn by her side, she retired to cover herself: she then gathered up her hair, that she might seem less disordered: she raised herself up, and seeing Felicitas bruised, she gave her her hand and lifted her up: then they went toward the gate, where Perpetua was received by a catechumen, called Rusticus, who attended her: "I wonder," said she, "when they will expose us to the cow;"—She had been, it seems, insensible of what had passed, nor could believe it till she saw on her body and clothes the marks of her sufferings. She caused her brother to be called, and addressing herself to him and Rusticus, she said, "Continue firm in the faith; love one another; and be neither frightened nor offended at our sufferings."

The people insisted on having the martyrs brought into the midst of the amphitheatre, that they might have the pleasure of seeing them die: some of them rose up and went forward of their own accord, after having given one another the kiss of charity: others received the last blow without speaking or stirring. Perpetua fell into the hands of an unskilful gladiator, who pierced her between the ribs so as to give her much unnecessary pain. She cried out; and then she herself guided his trembling hand to her throat:—and thus with the rest she slept in Jesus.

Augustine, in his exposition of the forty-seventh Psalm, takes notice of the victorious strength of divine love prevailing over all natural affections, and produces this same Perpetua as an exam-

ple:—"We know and read thus in the sufferings of the blessed Perpetua."—He mentions the same story also in three other places in his treatise of the Soul.† But it is evident that he doubts whether Perpetua herself wrote what is ascribed to her. If so, we may well doubt; and more than doubt the truth of the visions with which this excellent narrative has been intermixed; and with which I have not thought it worth while to trouble the reader. Yet the general history has every mark of authenticity.—Augustine himself published three sermons on the anniversary of the martyrs. It is much to be regretted that the finest monuments of ecclesiastical antiquity have been thus tarnished by mixtures of fraud or superstition.—The authority of Augustine has enabled me to distinguish with some degree of precision the truth from the falsehood. My business does not call me to recite the frauds; and it will be needless to add further remarks: The pious reader sees, with pleasure, that God was yet present with his people.—Indeed the power of God appeared evidently displayed during the course of this dreadful persecution, by the sudden and amazing conversions of several persons who voluntarily suffered death for that doctrine which they before detested. Of this we have the very respectable testimony of Origen, who, whatever other defects he be justly charged with, is certainly allowed to be of unquestionable veracity.‡

Severus would naturally extend this persecution to Gaul, the scene of his former cruelties. In fact, it was now that Irenæus suffered: and many more suffered with him; and Lyons was once more dyed with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Vivarius and Androlus, who had been sent by Polycarp there to preach the Gospel, were put to death. At Comana, in Pamphylia, Zoticus the bishop, who had distinguished himself by writing against the Montanists, obtained the crown of martyrdom.

At this trying season it was that some churches purchased their peace and quiet by paying money, not only to the magistrates, but also to the informers and soldiers who were appointed to search them out. The pastors of the churches ap-

Vivarius,
Androlus,
Zoticus,
martyred.

* Tom. v. iii.

† L. 1. c. 10. L. 3. c. 9. L. 4. c. 13. Tom. vii.

‡ Contra Celsum. L. 1.

proved of this proceeding, because it was only suffering the loss of their goods, and preferring that to the endangering of their lives. However casuists may decide this question, it is easily conceivable that the practice might take place with many in real uprightness of heart.

It is usual with God to moderate the sufferings of his people, and not to suffer them to be tried by persecution at once very long and very violent.—In the year two hundred and eleven, after a reign of eighteen years, the tyrant Severus died: and the Church found repose and tranquillity under his son and successor Caracalla, though a monster of wickedness.

Divine Providence had long before prepared for the Christians this mitigation of trial, in the circumstances of Caracalla's education. He had known Proculus the Christian, who had recovered the health of his father, and was maintained in his palace to his death; and he had himself been nursed, when an infant, by a Christian woman. Though this could not win his heart to Jesus Christ, it gave him an early predilection in favour of Christians, inasmuch that when he was seven years old, observing one of his playfellows to be beaten because he followed the Christian religion,* he could not for some time after behold with patience either his own father or the father of the boy. Certainly few men have ever excused him in the ferocious vices; yet, during the six years and two months which he reigned, the Christians found in him friendship and protection. Indeed, for the space of thirty and eight years,—from the death of Severus to the reign of Decius,—if we except the short turbulent interval of Maximinus, the Church enjoyed a continued calm.†—

About the year two hundred and ten, Origen came to Rome, where Zephyrinus was bishop, desirous of visiting that ancient Church, but soon returned to Alexandria, and to his office of catechising. He entrusted to Heracles, his associate in that employment, the instruction of the more ignorant, while he himself took care of those who had made a greater proficiency. His active spirit

induced him to study the Hebrew language; and the first fruit of his labour was the publication of the Hexapla. In this great work he gave the Hebrew text and the translations of the Septuagint, of Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion,—and two others, which had long been obsolete, and whose authors were unknown. Of these interpreters, Symmachus was an Ebionite; that is, he held that Christ was but a mere man;‡ and he inveighed against the genuine gospel of St. Matthew, for no other reason that I can see, but on account of the clear testimony which the beginning of it affords against his heresy.—These works of Origen, in addition to his constant diligence, both in writing and in preaching, are monuments at least of the most laudable industry. The evangelical reader would wish, no doubt, to see stronger signs of real Christian proficiency in experimental and practical religion; but we must be content with such matter as the ecclesiastical records afford us.

One Ambrose, addicted to the Valentinian heresy, an extremely fanciful and romantic scheme, not worthy of the reader's attention, found himself confuted by Origen, and was brought over to the Church. Many learned men also felt the force of his argumentations. Heretics and philosophers attended his lectures; and he took, no doubt, a very excellent method to procure regard to himself at least; he instructed them in profane and secular learning. He confuted the opinions of the different sects by opposing them to each other; and he exposed the various fallacies with so much acuteness and sagacity, that he obtained among the Gentiles the reputation of a great Philosopher. He encouraged many persons to study the liberal arts, assuring them, that they would, by that means, be much better furnished for the contemplation of the Holy Scriptures:—He was entirely of opinion, that secular and philosophical institutes were very necessary and profitable to his own mind.—Does it escape the reader, how much in the course of the Christian annals, we are already departed, though by insensible degrees, from Christian simplicity! Here is a man looked up to with reverence, at least by the Eastern Church, as a great luminary;—a man, who, in his younger days, was himself a scholar of the amphibious

* Suetonius's Caracalla. The Pagan author says, "because he followed the Jewish religion," but, most probably, he means the Christian.

† Sulpitius Severus, B. 2. C. 42.

• Euseb. B. 6. C. 16.

Ammonius; who mixed together Christianity and pagan philosophy; and who, by reading his motley lectures drew over, in form at least, many of the heathen philosophers to embrace the religion of Jesus. These mention him often in their books: some dedicate their works to him; and others respectfully deliver them to him as their master. All this Eusebius tells us with much apparent satisfaction. To him the Gospel seems to have triumphed over gentilism by these means.—There is no doubt, but, in a certain sense, Origen's success was great; but I much fear that, in return, the pure Gospel suffered greatly by an admixture of gentilism. What can this extraordinary teacher and author mean, by asserting the utility and even the necessity of philosophy for himself as a Christian? Are not the Scriptures ABLE TO MAKE A MAN WISE UNTO SALVATION THROUGH FAITH WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS, THAT THE MAN OF GOD MAY BE PERFECT, THOROUGHLY FURNISHED TO EVERY GOOD WORK? Suppose a man of common sense, perfectly unacquainted with all the learned lore of Ammonius, to study ONLY the sacred books, with prayer, dependence on divine guidance and illumination, and with self-examination, Is it not conceivable that he may acquire a competent,—nay, even an eminent knowledge of the Scriptures? Certainly an acquaintance with classical and philosophical learning may furnish him with strong arguments to prove the necessity and the excellency of divine revelation; and therefore they deserve seriously to be encouraged in the minds of all who are to instruct others,—for their improvement in taste, language, eloquence, and history; but if they are to DICTATE in religion,—or are thought capable even of ADDING to the stock of theological knowledge,—the Scriptures,—with reverence be it spoken,—may seem to have been defectively written. In truth, we hear, among these learned converts of Origen, nothing—of conviction of sin—of conversion—of the influence of the Holy Spirit—of the love of Christ. They are pleased with their master:—Superior parts and learning always command the esteem of mankind:—but, what are all his labours which we have now before us, but vain attempts to mix things which the Holy Ghost has declared will not incorporate? The mischief which

actually followed was to be expected: Characters were confounded: and henceforward, among the learned, the distinction between Christian godliness and human philosophy is but faintly marked.—If Origen had simply and plainly expounded to his learned auditors the peculiar and vital truths of the Gospel, I cannot but suspect that many of them would have ceased to attend his instructions.

The famous Porphyry,—than whom Christianity had never a more acrimonious enemy,—takes notice of Origen's allegorical mode of interpreting Scripture, observes that he was acquainted with him when young, and bears testimony to his rapid improvements under Ammonius. He asserts,—what indeed Eusebius, who must have known, contradicts,—that Ammonius, though brought up a Christian, turned afterwards a Gentile. He acknowledges “that Origen continually perused Plato, Numenius, and the rest of the Pythagoreans; that he was well versed in Chæremón the Stoic, and in Cornutus; and, that from all these masters he borrowed the Grecian manner of allegorical interpretation, and applied it to the Jewish Scriptures.”

We have seen, before, the wanton spirit of allegory introduced by Ammonius: and it is very probable that Origen then first learnt to treat the Scriptures in the same manner. He had the candour to confess that he had been mistaken in his literal interpretation of our Saviour's words concerning eunuchs. He afterwards fell into the contrary extreme, and allegorized all the three clauses in the Gospel of St. Matthew;—and introduced such a complicated scheme of fanciful interpretation, as for many ages after,—through the excessive respect paid to this man,—much obscured the light of Scripture.

There wanted not, however, some persons who found fault with Origen for all this attachment to pagan philosophy. Probably, simple, docile, ingenuous minds, which desired to be fed with the “SINCERE MILK OF THE WORD, THAT THEY MIGHT GROW THEREBY,” found themselves starved amidst all this heterogeneous, inconsistent doctrine. He felt himself called upon to vindicate his practice;—which he does, only by observing the use of philosophy in confuting heretics; and by the example of Pantænus, and of He-

raclas, an Alexandrian pastor,—his coadjutor, who formerly had worn the common dress, and afterwards took up the philosopher's garb, and still studied earnestly the writings of the heathen philosophers. What does all this prove but the destructive progress of this epidemical disease!

The governor of Arabia sent to Demetrius, desiring the instruction of Origen; who did not hesitate to undertake the necessary journey for that purpose; and he then returned back to Alexandria.

The elegant publication of Minucius Felix,—a work deserving even to be ranked among the Latin classics for neatness and purity of style, was an ornament to the Latin Church. The arguments contained in it against Paganism are well pointed and well adapted to the state of the world at that time: It is only to be regretted that we see not more of the real nature of Christianity in that celebrated performance.

Macrinus
succeeded
Caracalla,
A. D. 217.

In the year two hundred and seventeen, Macrinus succeeded Caracalla, who had reigned a little more than six years.

CHAPTER VI.

STATE OF CHRISTIANITY DURING THE
REIGNS OF MACRINUS, HELIOGABALUS,
ALEXANDER, MAXIMINUS, PUP-
IENUS, GORDIAN, AND PHILIP.

MACRINUS reigned one year and two months; and was succeeded by Helio-

Macrinus
reigns one
year and
two months.

gabalus; whose follies and vices are infamous; but it does not appear that the Church of God suffered on that account.

He seems not to have conceived any particular prejudices against Christians; on the contrary, he expressed a desire of removing their rites of worship to Rome.—It is not worth while to attempt an explanation of the views of so senseless a prince.

Helio-
gabalus suc-
ceeded, and
is slain,
A. D. 222.

—He was slain at the age of eighteen, in the year two hundred and twenty-two, after he had swayed the sceptre three

years and nine months. His cousin Alexander succeeded him; who was then only in the sixteenth year of his age, but was esteemed one of the best moral characters in profane history. His mother

Mammaea, is called by Eusebius,* a most godly and religious woman.—I am at a loss to vindicate the expression.—It does not appear that she received the faith of Christ:—however,—neither she nor her son persecuted, they rather approved and countenanced, the Christians. They were persons of candour and probity themselves; and they saw that, in morals at least, the people of God concurred with their own views. Their conduct was laudable; but—MARK the mischief of blending philosophy with Christianity! How cheap is the term **GODLY** grown in the eyes of Eusebius!

The providence of God not only secured his Church from suffering, but procured it a favourable patron in this princess and her son. The emperor had a domestic chapel, where, every morning, he worshipped those deceased princes, whose characters were most esteemed: their statues were placed among those of the gods: and into this company he introduced Apollonius of Tyana, Jesus Christ, Abraham, and Orpheus.† He had a desire to erect even a temple to Christ, and to receive him regularly into the number of the gods.

There are on record other instances of his candour towards the Christians.—The right of possessing a certain piece of ground was claimed by a tavern-keeper: It had been common for a long time,‡ and the Christians had occupied it for a place of worship.—“It is fitter,” said Alexander, “that God should be served there, in any manner whatever, rather than that it should be used for a tavern.” He frequently used this Christian sentence, “Do as you would be done by.” He obliged a crier to repeat it when he punished any person; and was so fond of it, that he caused it to be written in his palace and in the public buildings. When he was going to appoint governors of provinces or other officers, he proposed their names in public, giving the people notice, that if they had any crime to accuse them of, they should come forward and make it known. “It would be a shame,” says he, “not to do that with respect to governors, who are entrusted with men’s properties and lives, which is done by Jews and Christians when they publish the names

* Euseb. l. 6. Fleury, B. v. iv.

† Lamprid.

‡ That is, without owner or possessor.

of those whom they mean to ordain Priests." And, indeed, by Origen's account,* the Christians were so very careful in the choice of their pastors, that the civil magistrates were by no means to be compared with them in probity and sound morality. This prince had, it seems, too much gravity and virtue for the times in which he lived:—for some persons, in derision, called him Archysynagogue.†

It seems to have been his plan to encourage every thing that carried the appearance of religion and virtue; and to discountenance whatever was openly immoral and profane.—His historian‡ tells us "that he favoured astrologers, and permitted them to teach publicly; that he himself was well skilled in the vain science of the Aruspices, and was master of that of the Augurs in a high degree."

In the year two hundred and twenty-nine Alexander was obliged to go to the East, and to reside at Antioch. His mother Mammea went with him, and having heard of the fame of Origen, and being very curious to hear new things; she sent him a guard, and caused him to come to her. All the account we have of this interview is, that he continued there awhile, and published many things to the glory of God, and concerning the power of the heavenly doctrine; and, that he then returned to his school at Alexandria.

What Origen taught this princess we are not told: What he ought to have taught her, the Acts of the Apostles would have amply informed him.—A plain and artless declaration of the vanity and wickedness of all the reigning idolatries and philosophical sects: and what is still more—of the corruption, helplessness, and misery of man, and a faithful information concerning the only way of salvation by Jesus Christ, the great duty of believing on him; of confessing him, and of admitting the sanctifying operations of his Spirit,—these things a perfectly sound preacher would have shown to her; and his exhortations would have been entirely founded on these doctrines; nor would he have felt the necessity of aiding his message by the authority of Plato or of any other philosopher.—History informs us of no remarkable effect

which attended the ministry of Origen on this occasion. That he spake what he believed, and what he thought most wise and expedient, is not to be doubted; but we may be allowed to lament, that his own state and views were too similar to those of Mammea and of her son, to permit him to represent Christianity to them in the clearest and most striking manner. In truth, it is to be feared that a number of Christians so called, at this time, were much of the same religion with Alexander himself.—He seems to have learnt, in some measure, the doctrine of the unity of the Godhead; and by the help of the eclectic philosophy to have consolidated all religions into one mass.—But the Scriptural method of teaching things that accompany salvation will not incorporate with this system of doctrines.

The liberality of his friend Ambrose enabled Origen to prosecute his Scriptural studies with vast rapidity. Ambrose himself was a deacon of the Church; and, by his faithfulness under persecution, he obtained the name of Confessor.

At this time Noetus of Smyrna propagated the same heresy in the East, which Praxeas had done in the West,—namely, that there was no distinction among the Divine Persons. The pastors of the Church of Ephesus summoned him before them; and demanded whether he really maintained this opinion. At first he denied it; but afterwards, having formed a party, he became more bold, and publicly taught his heresy. Being again interrogated by the pastors, he said, "What harm have I done? I glorify none but one God; I know none besides him who hath been begotten, who suffered and died." He evidently, in this way, confounded the persons of the Father and the Son together; and being obstinate in his views, he was ejected out of the Church with all his disciples.—We have here an additional proof of the jealousy of the primitive Christians in support of the fundamental articles of Christianity: The connexion also indissolubly preserved between heretical depravity and pride of heart appeared in this teacher.—He called himself Moses, and his brother Aaron.*

Origen was now sent for to Athens to assist the Churches, which were there disturbed with several heresies. Thence

* Ag. Celsus, B. iii. and viii.

† The chief ruler of the synagogue.

‡ Lampridius.

* Fleury, B. v. Epiphanius and Theodoret.

Origen
ordained
priest,
A. D. 220.

he went to Palestine. At Casarea, Theoctistus the bishop, and Alexander bishop of Jerusalem, ordained him a priest at the age of forty-five, about the year two hundred and thirty. Demetrius, his own bishop, was offended; and, at length, divulged what had hitherto been kept very secret,—the indiscreet self-mutilation before mentioned, which took place in the youth of Origen. Alexander defended himself in what he had done, by the encomium which Demetrius had given of Origen in his letter. The latter, on his return to Alexandria, found his bishop quite incensed against him; for he procured even his ejection from the Church by a council of pastors, on account of some errors that appeared in his works. What judgment is to be formed of these errors I shall have a future occasion to consider. Banished from Egypt, this great man lived now in Palestine, with his friends Theoctistus and Alexander, still followed by many disciples, and particularly respected by Firmilian of Cappadocia, who looked upon it as a happiness to enjoy his instructions. Here also the famous Gregory Thaumaturgos attended his theological lectures, which, even in his exile, were delivered in Origen's usual manner.

Demetrius, bishop of Alexandria, died, after having held that office forty-three years. A long period!—but our information is too indistinct and scanty to enable us to pronounce his real character. If we were sure that he preserved a very upright conscience toward God in things of essential moment, something might be advanced to justify his severe treatment of Origen: but, as we are left on that head to conjectures, it is, perhaps, better to be silent.—Origen's assistant Heraclas succeeded him.

In the year two hundred and thirty-five, Alexander was murdered, together with his mother; and Maximin the murderer obtained the empire. His mother, against the house of Alexander disposed him to persecute the Christians; and he gave orders to put to death the pastors of the Churches. The persecution was not confined to them: Others suffered at the same time; and, it seems by Firmilian's letter to Cyprian of Carthage, that the flame extended to Cappadocia. Ambrose,

The Em-
peror
Alexander
murdered,
A. D. 235.
Maximin
begins the
6th Persecu-
tion.

the friend of Origen, and Protocletus, minister of Casarea, suffered much in the course of it; and to them Origen dedicated his Book of Martyrs. He himself was obliged to retire. But the tyrant's reign lasted only three years, in which time it must be confessed that the rest of the world had tasted of his ferocity as much as the Christians had.—His persecution of them was local; but his cruelty to mankind in general seemed to have no limits.

Pupienus and Balbinus, the successors of Maximin, were slain in the year two hundred and thirty-eight; Gordian reigned for six years, and was

Pupienus
and Balbi-
nus killed,
A. D. 238.

then supplanted by the usual military turbulence, which made way for his murderer, Philip the Arabian.

Origen, in a letter to his scholar Gregory Thaumaturgos, exhorts him to apply himself chiefly to the Holy Scripture; to read it very attentively; not to speak or judge of it lightly, but with unshaken faith and prayer, which, says he, is absolutely necessary for the understanding of it.—This exhortation will be noticed by the pious reader, doubtless, with much satisfaction. It proves that his philosophy had not obliterated his Christianity.

A fresh attempt was now made to pervert the doctrine of the person of Christ,—Beryllus, bishop of Bostra in Arabia, affirmed that our Saviour, before his incarnation, had no proper divinity, but only his Father's divinity dwelling in himself. Thus Eusebius states the matter. It is not easy to form clear ideas of these sentiments: they seem, however, to annihilate the divine personality of the eternal Word. The man, it seems, was not obstinate; he listened to sound scriptural argument, and was therefore reclaimed by means of Origen. He even loved his instructor ever after, and was sincerely thankful to him;—a circumstance, which reflects an amiable light on the character of Beryllus.*

Philip began to reign in the year two hundred and forty-four. Eusebius tells us that he was a Christian; and indeed that he was so, by profession, seems well attested by the concurrent voice of antiquity. He is said to have

Philip
reigns,
A. D. 244.

* Hieronym. Eccl. Scrip. L. ix.—See Dr. Waterland on the Importance of the Trinity.

submitted to certain ecclesiastical censures from a bishop; but the report is void of proper authenticity;—and most probably, he ranked at his death only

He allows
idolatrous
games,
A. D. 247.

as a Catechumen. There is, however, no doubt, but in the fourth year of his reign, and in the year of Christ two hundred and forty-seven, he allowed and conducted the secular games, which were full of idolatry: and this is a fact, which clearly proves that he was not disposed to give up any thing for the sake of Christ: And, in general, there is not the least ground to conclude from history that he was a cordial friend to the Gospel.—Nevertheless the progress of Christianity in the world at this time must have been very great, which could induce so worldly-minded a person as Philip to countenance it without reserve or ambiguity.—To this emperor and to his wife Severa, Origen wrote an epistle, which was extant in Eusebius's time.

It appears from one of the homilies of Origen, that the long peace which the Church,—with only the short interruption of Maximian's persecution,—had enjoyed, was followed by a great degree of lukewarmness and even of much religious indecorum. Let the reader only notice the difference between the scenes which he here describes, and the conduct of the Christians both in the first and second century, and he will be affected with the greatness of the declension.

"Several,"* says he, "come to Church only on solemn festivals; and then, not so much for instruction as diversion: Some go out again as soon as they have heard the lecture, without conferring or asking the pastors any questions: Others stay not till the lecture is ended; and others hear not so much as a single word, but entertain themselves in a corner of the church."

By the blessing of Almighty God, nothing was so likely to conquer this careless spirit, as the faithful dispensation of the peculiar truths of the Gospel in a practical manner, so as to search the heart.—But the ability as well as the taste for doing this had much declined, in the Eastern part of the Church especially.—Origen complains elsewhere of the ambitious and haughty manners of pastors, and of the improper steps which some took to obtain PREFERMENTS.

This great man was now once more employed in Arabia in confuting another error, namely,—of those who denied the intermediate state of souls; and this he managed with his usual good success.*

Philip enjoyed the fruits of his crimes five years, and was then slain and succeeded by Decius.—A little before his death, in the year two hundred and forty-eight, CYPRIAN was chosen bishop of Carthage.—A star of the first magnitude,—when we consider the times in which he lived. Let us recreate ourselves with the contemplation of it: We are fatigued with hunting for Christian goodness; and we have discovered but little: and that little with much difficulty.—We shall find Cyprian to be a character, who partook indeed of the declensions which we have noticed and lamented; but who was still far superior, I apprehend, in real simplicity and piety, to the Christians of the East.

Cyprian
made
bishop of
Carthage,
A. D. 248.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONVERSION OF CYPRIAN.

THE life of this prelate was written by Pontius his deacon. It is to be regretted, that one who must have known him so well, should have written in so incompetent a manner. Very little distinct information is to be gathered from him; but Cyprian's own letters are extant, and from them I shall endeavour to exhibit whatever is of the greatest moment. They are, in truth, a valuable treasure of ecclesiastical history: The spirit, taste, discipline, and habits of the times, among Christians, are strongly delineated, nor have we in all the third century any account to be compared with them. He was a professor of oratory in the city of Carthage, and a man of wealth, quality, and dignity. Cæcilius, a Carthaginian presbyter, had the felicity, under God, to conduct him to the knowledge of Christ; and in his gratitude, Cyprian afterwards assumed the prænomen of Cæcilius. His conversion was about the year two hundred and forty-six; and two years before his elevation to the see of Carthage. About thirteen years compre-

Conver-
sion of
Cyprian,
A. D. 246.

* Fleury.

* Euseb. B. vi. 36.

hend the whole scene of his Christian life. —But God can do great things in a little time; or to speak more nervously with the sacred writer, “ONE DAY IS WITH THE LORD AS A THOUSAND YEARS.” He did not proceed by slow painful steps of argumentation, but seems to have been led on with vast rapidity by the effectual operation of the Divine Spirit:—and he happily escaped, in a great measure at least, the shoals and quicksands of false learning and self-conceit, which so much tarnished the character of his eastern brethren. Faith and love in native simplicity appear to have been possessed by him when an early convert. He saw with pity the poor of the flock; and he knew no method so proper of employing “the unrighteous mammon as in relieving their distress.”*—He sold whole estates for their benefit.

It was an excellent rule of the Apostle concerning ordination, “Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.” There appeared, however, in Cyprian a spirit at once so simple, so zealous, and so intelligent, that in about two years after his conversion he was chosen presbyter, and then bishop of Carthage.

It was no feigned virtue that thus advanced him in the eyes of the people. With Cyprian the love of Christ evidently preponderated above all secular considerations. In vain his wife opposed his Christian spirit of liberality. The widow, the orphan, and the poor, found in him a sympathizing benefactor continually. The presbyter Cæcilius must have beheld with much delight the growing virtues of his pupil:—When dying he recommended to his care his own wife and children. It was with no satisfaction that Cyprian observed the designs of the people to choose him for their bishop. He retired, to avoid solicitation; His house was besieged; His retreat was rendered impossible. He yielded at length, and with much reluctance accepted the PAINFUL PRE-EMINENCE; for so he soon found it.—Five presbyters, however, were enemies to his exaltation. His lenity, patience, and benevolence towards them were remarked by every one.

The active spirit of Cyprian was, no doubt, much employed before he was made a bishop: Indeed Pontius tells us, that this was actually the case; but he

communicates no particulars. St. Austin says, that his letter to Donatus was his first work; and, therefore, the time of writing it may safely be placed before his arrival at episcopal dignity. Part of this letter, as it will illustrate his conversion, and show the spirit of a man penetrated with divine love, and lately recovered from the idolatry of the world, well deserves to be translated.—“I find your whole care and concern at present is for conversion: you look at me; and in your affection, expect much from me:—I fear I cannot answer your expectations. Small fruits must be looked for from my unworthiness;—Yet, I will make the attempt, for the SUBJECT-MATTER is all on my side.—Let plausible arts of ambition be used in courts; but when we speak of the Lord God, plainness and sincerity, not the powers of eloquence, should be used. Hear, then, things not eloquent, but important; not courtly, but rude and simple;—so, should the divine goodness be celebrated always with artless truth.—Hear, then, an account of something which is felt before it is learnt; and is not collected by a long course of speculation, but is imbibed by the soul through the compendium of grace ripening her, as it were, all at once.

“While I lay in darkness and the night of paganism, and when I fluctuated uncertain and dubious with wandering steps in the sea of a tempestuous age, ignorant of my own life, and alienated from light and truth, it appeared to me a harsh and difficult thing, as my manners then were, to obtain what divine grace had promised,—namely, that a man should be born again; and that, being animated to a new life by the salutary washing of regeneration,* he should strip himself of what he was before, and though the body remained the same, he should, in his mind, become altogether a new creature. How can so great a change be possible, said I,—that a man should suddenly and at once put off what nature and habit have confirmed in him. These evils are deeply and closely fixed in us. How shall he learn parsimony, who has been accustomed to expensive and magnificent feasts? And how shall he, who has been accustomed to purple, gold, and costly attire, condescend to the simplicity of a plebeian habit? Can he who was delight-

* Pontius, Vit. Cyp.

* An instance we have here of the powerful effects of regeneration attending baptism in those days.

ed with the honours of ambition, live private and obscure! Further,—the man has been accustomed to crowds of clients, and will think solitude the most dreadful punishment.—He must still, thought I, be infested by tenacious allurements: Drunkenness, pride, anger, rapacity, cruelty, ambition, and last, must still domineer over him.

“These reflections engaged my mind very often; for they were peculiarly applicable to my own case.—I was myself entangled in many errors of my former life, from which I did not think it possible to be cleared: hence, I favoured my vices, and, through despair of what was better, I stuck close to them as part of my very frame and constitution. But after the filth of my former sins was washed away in the laver of regeneration, and divine light, from above, had infused itself into my heart, now purified and cleansed; after, through the effusion of the Holy Spirit from heaven, the new birth had made me a new creature indeed,—immediately, and in an amazing manner, dubious things began to be cleared up; things once shut were opened; dark things shone forth; and what before seemed difficult and even impossible, now appeared easy and practicable. I saw that, that which was born after the flesh and had lived enslaved by wickedness, was of the ‘earth, earthy;’ but that the new life now animated by the Holy Ghost, began to be of God. You know and recollect, as perfectly as I do, my conversion from a deadly criminal state to a state of lively virtue: You know what these opposite states have done for me:—what they have taken away; and what they have conferred: and therefore, I need not proclaim it: To boast of one’s own merits is odious; though that cannot be called an expression of boasting, but of gratitude, which ascribes nothing to the virtue of man, but professes all to proceed from the gift of God: Thus deliverance from sin is the consequence of sound faith:—The preceding sinful state was owing to human blindness.—Of God it is,—of God, I say, even all that we can do: thence we live;—thence we have strength;—thence we conceive and assume vigour; even though, as yet, placed here below, we have some clear foretaste of our future felicity. Only,—let fear be the guardian of innocence; that the Lord, who kindly shone into our minds with an effusion of heavenly grace, may be detained

as our guest by the steady obedience of the soul which delights in him,—lest pardon received should beget a careless presumption, and the old enemy break in afresh.

“But if you keep the road of innocence and of righteousness, if you walk with footsteps that do not slide;—if, depending upon God with all your heart and with all your might, you be only what you have begun to be, you will then find, that according to the proportion of faith, so will your attainments and enjoyments be. For no bound or measure can be assigned in the reception of divine grace, as is the case of earthly benefits. The Holy Spirit is poured forth copiously; is confined by no limits; is restrained by no barriers; he flows perpetually; he bestows in rich abundance: Let our heart only thirst and be open to receive him: As much of capacious faith as we bring, so much abounding grace do we draw from him. Hence an ability is given, with sober chastity, uprightness of mind, and purity of language, to heal the sick, to extinguish the force of poison, to cleanse the filth of disordered minds, to speak peace to the hostile; to give tranquillity to the violent, and gentleness to the fierce; to compel, by menaces, unclean and wandering spirits to quit their hold of men; to scourge and control the foe, and by torments to bring him to confess what he is.—Thus, in what we have already begun to be, our new spiritual nature, which is entirely the gift of God, triumphs in its freedom from the bondage of sin and Satan; though, till our corruptible body and members be changed, the prospect, as yet carnal, is obscured by the clouds of worldly objects. What a faculty, what an energy is this!—that the soul should not only be emancipated from slavery, and be made free and pure; but also stronger and more efficient, so as to become victorious and triumphant over the powers of the enemy!”

The testimony here given to the ejection of evil spirits, as a common thing among the Christians, even in the third century, deserves to be noticed, as a proof that miraculous influences had not ceased in the Church. Minutius Felix speaks to the same purpose, and I think with more precision. “Being adjured by the living God, they tremble and remain wretched and reluctant in the bodies of men: they either leap out immediately, or vanish by degrees, as the faith of the patient or the grace of the person admi-

nistering relief may be strong or weak."—Indeed the testimony of the Fathers in these times is so general and concurrent, that the fact itself cannot be denied without universally impeaching their veracity. It is not my province to dwell on this point: The sanctifying graces of the Spirit call for my particular attention; and these are described by Cyprian as by one who had seen and tasted them. No doubt, after his conversion, he experienced in himself vital, energetic, and divine principles, far beyond the reach of ordinary rational processes;—and he appeals to his friend Donatus if he had not also felt the same.

We may safely, therefore, infer that such things were not then infrequent among Christians, though, certainly, the ~~errors~~ ^{errors} of the Holy Ghost did not so much abound as in the two former centuries.—Indeed, what but the power of God on the heart can account for a change so sudden, so rapid, and yet so firm and solid, as that of Cyprian? What can be conceived more opposite than the last thirteen years of his life compared with the former part of it!—Will modern fastidiousness call all this enthusiasm?

In this narrative, the reader will notice, that the essential doctrines of justification and regeneration by divine grace were not only believed but experienced by this zealous African.—The difference between mere human and divine teaching is rendered striking by such cases. With no great furniture of learning, it was his happiness to know little, if any thing, of the then reigning philosophy.—We see a man of business and of the world rising at once a Phoenix in the Church; and though no extraordinary Theologian in point of accurate knowledge, yet an useful practical Divine, an accomplished Pastor, flaming with the love of God and of souls, and with unremitting activity spending and being spent for Jesus Christ.—This is the Lord's doing; and it should be remarked as his work.—We shall see that Cyprian's own conversion prepared him for actual service. Argument and dispute prevailed among Christians in the East;—brotherly love in the West.

He needed a remarkable influence of Divine Grace, which to him appeared to have accompanied his baptism. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that this was commonly the case at that time. The inward and spiritual grace really attended the outward and visible sign. And is

to be lamented, that the corruption and perversion of after ages, availing itself of the ambiguous language of the fathers on this subject,—which, with them, was natural enough,—supposed a NECESSARY connexion to take place where there had been a frequent one. In Cyprian's time, to call baptism itself the new birth was not very dangerous: In our age it is poison itself: Men are apt to content themselves with the outward and visible sign; and it has long been the fashion to suppose, all persons who have been baptised when they were infants, to be, of course, when they are grown up, in a state of regeneration by the Holy Spirit: and thus men have learned to furnish themselves with a convenient evasion of all that is written in Scripture concerning the godly motions of the third Person of the sacred Trinity.*

Cyprian goes on,—“And that the marks of divine goodness may appear the more perspicuously by a discovery of the truth, I would lay open to your view the real state of the world;—I would remove the thick darkness which covers it, and detect the hidden mischiefs and the evils which it contains.—For a little time, fancy yourself withdrawn to the top of a high mountain;—thence inspect the appearance of things below you; look all around;—preserve yourself unfettered by worldly connexions,—observe the fluctuating tempests of the world;—you will then pity mankind; you will understand and be sensible of your own happiness;—you will be more thankful to God; and, with more joy, you will congratulate yourself on your escape.”

He then gives an affecting view of the immensity of evils which the state of mankind at that time exhibited, and graphically delineates the miseries of public and of private life; after which he returns to the description of the blessings of true Christianity.

“The only placid and sound tranquillity,” says he, “the only solid, firm, and

* It is true that the term regeneration may be so defined as to imply no more than the inner ceremony of baptism. But the real danger is, lost by any contrivances in our definitions, we either do away entirely, or at least weaken, the necessity of the operations of the Holy Spirit, so essential both in the first work of conversion, and also in the carrying on of that work; or in the words of our Tenth Article, so essential in “preventing us that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will.”

perpetual security is, to be delivered from the tempests of this restless scene, to be stationed in the port of salvation; to lift up the eyes from earth to heaven, and to be admitted into the favour of the Lord: Such a man approaches, in his thoughts, near to his God; and justly glories, that whatever others deem sublime and great in human affairs,—is absolutely beneath his notice. He, who is greater than the world, can desire nothing, can want nothing from the world. What an unshaken protection; what a truly divine shelter fraught with eternal good, it must be, to be loosed from the snares of an entangling world, to be purged from earthly dregs, and to be wafted into the light of immortal day! When we see what the insidious rage of a destructive enemy was plotting against us;—certainly, we must be the more compelled to love what we shall be, because we have now learned both to know and to condemn what we were. Nor is there, for this end, any need of price, of canvassing, or of manual labour: This complete dignity or power of man is not to be acquired by elaborate efforts: The gift of God is gratuitous and easy. As the sun shines freely, as the fountain bubbles, as the rain bedews, so the Celestial Spirit infuses himself. The soul looks up to heaven and becomes conscious of its Author: It then begins actually to be what it believes itself to be: It is higher than the firmament, and sublimer than all earthly power. Only,—do you, whom the heavenly warfare hath marked for divine service, preserve untainted and sober your Christian course by the virtues of religion. Let prayer or reading be your assiduous employment: Sometimes speak with God: At other times hear him speak to you: Let him instruct you by his precepts; let him regulate you: Whom he hath made rich, none shall make poor. There can be no penury with him whose heart has once been enriched with celestial bounty. Roofs arched with gold, and houses inlaid with marble, will be vile in your eyes, when you know that your own minds ought rather to be cultivated and adorned: That this house is more valuable, which the Lord has chosen to be his temple, in which the Holy Ghost has begun to dwell. Let us adorn this house with the paintings of innocence, let us illuminate it with the light of righteousness. This will never fall into ruin through the decays of age: Its ornaments shall never fade. What-

ever is not genuine is precarious, and affords to the possessor no sure foundation. This remains in its culture perpetually vivid; in honour, and in splendour, spotless and eternal: It can neither be abolished nor extinguished.—Is it then capable of no alteration?—Yes,—It will receive a rich improvement at the resurrection of the body.

“Let us be careful how we spend our time: let us rejoice; but let not an hour of entertainment be inconsistent or unconnected with divine grace. Let the sober banquet resound with psalms; and as your memory is good, and voice harmonious, perform this office,—as I believe you do.—It will be more than agreeable,—it will be delightful,—to your dear friends to hear of your spiritual and religious harmony.”

In all this the intelligent reader sees the picture of an active Christian,—possessed of a rich portion of that effusion of the Holy Ghost which, from the Apostles’ days, still exhibited Christ Jesus,—and fitted by experience to communicate to others the real Gospel, and to be a happy instrument of guiding souls to that rest which remains for the people of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE PERSECUTION OF DECIUS.—THE GOVERNMENT OF CYPRIAN TILL HIS RETIREMENT.

How Cyprian conducted himself in his bishopric, who is sufficient to relate? says Pontius, in the fulness of his admiration. Some PARTICULAR account, however, might have been expected from one who had such large opportunity of information. He does make some brief observations on his external appearance. “His looks had the due mixture of gravity and cheerfulness; so that it was doubtful whether he were more worthy of love or of reverence. His dress also was correspondent to his looks: He had renounced the secular pomp to which his rank in life entitled him;—yet he avoided affected penury.”—From a man of Cyprian’s piety and good sense united, such a conduct might be expected.

While Cyprian was labouring to recover the spirit of godliness among the Africans, which long peace had corrupted, Philip was slain, and succeeded by Decius. His en-

The 7th Persecu-

tion by Decius, conspiracy to the former emperor conspired with his pagan prejudices to bring on the most dreadful persecution which the Church had yet experienced. It was evident that nothing less than the destruction of the Christian name was intended. The chronology is here remarkably embarrassed; nor is it an object of much consequence to trouble either myself or the reader with studious attempts to settle it. Suffice it to say, that the eventful

The extent of it, A. D. 243 to 260.

period before us of Cyprian's bishopric extends from the year two hundred and forty-eight to two hundred and sixty, and that Decius's accession to the empire must have taken place about the beginning of it. The persecution raged with astonishing fury, beyond the example of former persecutions, both in the East and West. The latter is the scene before us at present. In a treatise of Cyprian concerning the lapsed,* we have an affecting account of the declension from the spirit of Christianity, which had taken place before his conversion, and which moved God to chastise his Church. "If the cause of our miseries," says he, "be investigated, the cure of the wound may be found. The Lord would have his family to be TRIED. And because long peace had corrupted the discipline divinely revealed to us, the heavenly chastisement hath raised up our faith, which had lain almost dormant: and when, by our sins, we had deserved to suffer still more, the merciful Lord so moderated all things, that the whole scene rather deserves the name of a trial than a persecution. Each had been bent on improving his patrimony; and had forgotten what believers had done under the Apostles, and what they ought always to do.—They were brooding over the arts of amassing wealth:—The pastors and the deacons each forgot their duty: Works of mercy were neglected, and discipline was at the lowest ebb.—Luxury and effeminacy prevailed: Meretricious arts in dress were cultivated: Fraud and deceit were practised among brethren.—Christians could unite themselves in matrimony with unbelievers; could swear not only without reverence, but even without veracity. With haughty asperity they despised their ecclesiastical superiors: They railed against one another with outrageous acrimony, and con-

ducted quarrels with determined malice:—Even many bishops, who ought to be guides and patterns to the rest, neglecting the peculiar duties of their stations, gave themselves up to secular pursuits:—They deserted their places of residence and their flocks: They travelled through distant provinces in quest of pleasure and gain; gave no assistance to the needy brethren; but were insatiable in their thirst of money:—They possessed estates by fraud, and multiplied usury. What have we not deserved to suffer for such a conduct? Even the Divine Word hath foretold us what we might expect, 'IF HIS CHILDREN FORSAKE MY LAW, AND WALK NOT IN MY JUDGMENTS, I WILL VISIT THEIR OFFENCES WITH THE ROD, AND THEIR SIN WITH SCOURGES.' These things had been denounced and foretold, but in vain: Our sins had brought our affairs to that pass, that because we had despised the Lord's directions, we were obliged to undergo a correction of our multiplied evils and a trial of our faith by severe remedies."

That a deep declension from Christian purity had taken place not only in the East, where false philosophy aided its progress, as we have seen, but also in the West, where the operation of no peculiar cause can be traced beyond the common influence of prosperity on human depravity, is now completely evident from this account of Cyprian; and,—it deserves to be remarked, that the first grand and general declension, after the primary EFFUSION of the Divine Spirit, should be fixed about the middle of this century. The wisdom and goodness of God is also to be observed in qualifying the bishop of Carthage by a strong personal work on his own heart: and then, in raising him to the See of Carthage, to superintend the western part of his Church in a time of trial like the present. The trial, no doubt, was kindly intended by Providence to operate as a medicine for the revival of the declining spirit of Christianity; but it needed, nevertheless, all that fortitude, zeal, and wisdom, with which Cyprian was so eminently endowed.

In such a situation it was not to be expected that the people under the bishop's care should, in general, stand their ground: avarice had taken deep root among them; and vast numbers lapsed into idolatry immediately. Even before men were accused as Christians, "many ran to the forum and sacrificed to the gods as they were ordered; and the crowds of apos-

* Section 4.

tates were so great* that the magistrates wished to delay numbers of them till the next day, but they were importuned by the wretched suppliants to be allowed to prove themselves heathens that very night."

At Rome, the persecution raged with unremitting violence. There Fabian the bishop suffered; and, for some time, it became impracticable to elect a successor: yet it does not appear that the metropolis suffered more, in proportion, than some other places, since we find that the flame of persecution had driven several bishops from distant provinces, and made them fly for shelter to Rome.† Cyprian, however, having been regularly informed by the Roman clergy of the martyrdom of their bishop, congratulated them on his glorious exit,‡ and exulted on occasion of his uprightness and integrity. He expresses the pleasure he conceived in observing that his edifying example had so much penetrated their minds; and owns the energy which he himself felt to imitate the pattern.

Moses and Maximus, two Roman presbyters, with other confessors, were also seized and imprisoned. Attempts were repeatedly made to persuade them to relinquish the faith, but in vain. Cyprian found means to write to THEM ALSO a letter full of benevolence, and breathing the strongest pathos.§ He tells them that his heart was with them continually,—that he prayed for them in his public ministry,—and in private. He comforts them under the pressures of hunger and thirst which they endured, and congratulates them for living now not for this life but for the next; and particularly, because their example would be a means of confirming many who were in a wavering state.—But Carthage soon became an unsafe scene to Cyprian himself.—By repeated suffrages of the people at the theatre he was demanded to be taken and given to the lions; and it behooved him immediately either to retire into a place of safety, or to expect the crown of martyrdom.

Cyprian's spirit in interpreting Scripture was more simple, and more accommodated to receive its plain and obvious sense, than that of men who had learned to refine and subtilize. He knew the liberty which his Divine Master had given

to his people—of fleeing when they were persecuted in one city, to another;—and he embraced it. Nay, he seems scarcely to have thought it lawful to do otherwise. —Even the last state of his martyrdom evinces this.—His manner of enduring it, when it, providentially, was brought on him, sufficiently acquits him of all suspicion of pusillanimity.—To unite such seemingly opposite things as discretion and fortitude, each in a very high degree, is a sure characteristic of greatness in a Christian:—It is grace in its highest exercise.—Pontius thinks it was not without a particular divine direction that he was moved to act in this manner for the benefit of the Church.

Behold him at present, in some place of retreat, under the protection of God, and through the love of his people safe for the space of two years from the arm of a most barbarous persecution; and let us next see how he employed this interval of retirement.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HISTORY OF CYPRIAN AND OF THE WESTERN CHURCH DURING HIS RETIREMENT OF TWO YEARS.

CYPRIAN was never more active than in his retreat. Nothing of moment occurred in ecclesiastical affairs either in Africa or in Italy with which he was unacquainted; and his counsels, under God, were of the greatest influence in both countries. I shall endeavour, from his own letters, which were written in this period, to abbreviate the account.

The presbyters of Carthage sent Clementius, a sub-deacon, to Rome, from whom the Roman clergy learnt the place of the retreat of the bishop. They, in return, express to the Africans their perfect agreement in opinion concerning the propriety of the concealment, because he was an eminent character, and a life extremely valuable to the Church. They represent the conflict as very important, which God had now permitted for the trial of his servants: They said, it was the express purpose of God to manifest both to angels and to men, that the conqueror shall be crowned, and the conquered, that is, the faithless apostate, be self-condemned. They express the deep sense which they had both of their own situation and that of the clergy of Carthage, whose duty it was to take care not to in-

* Cypri. de lapsis.

† Ep. 4.

‡ Ep. 31.

§ Ep. 16.

cur the censure passed on faithless shepherds in the prophet,* but rather to imitate their Lord the good shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep,† and who so earnestly and repeatedly charges Simon Peter, as a proof of his love to his Master, “to feed his sheep.”‡ “We would not wish, dear brethren,” say they, “to find you mere mercenaries, but good shepherds, since you know it must be highly sinful in you not to exhort the brethren to stand immovable in the faith, lest they be totally subverted by idolatry. Nor do we only in words thus exhort you; but, as you may learn from many who came from us to you, our actions, with the help of God, accord with our declarations: we make no scruple to hazard our lives; for we have before our eyes the fear of God and of eternal punishment, rather than the fear of men and of a temporary calamity: we do not desert the brethren; we exhort them to stand in the faith, and to be ready to follow their Lord when called: We have also done our utmost to recover those who had gone up to sacrifice in order that they might save their lives. Our Church stands firm in the faith in general: Some, indeed, overcome by terror, either because they were persons in high life, or were moved by the fear of man, have lapsed; yet these, though separated from us, we do not give up as lost altogether, but we exhort them to repent, if they may find mercy with him who is able to save: we would not, by abandoning them, render their case hopeless and incurable.

“We wish you, brethren, to act in the same manner, as much as in you lies:—Exhort the lapsed, if they should be seized a second time, to confess their Saviour. And we suggest to you to receive again into communion any of these, if they heartily desire it, and give proofs of sound repentance. And certainly officers should be appointed to minister to the widows, the sick, those in prison, and those who are in a state of banishment. A special care should be exercised over the schismatics, to preserve them from apostasy; and those whose duty it is to inter the dead, ought to consider the interment of the martyrs as matter of indispensable obligation.

“Sure we are, that those servants, who shall be found to have been thus faithful

in that which is least, will have ‘authority over ten cities.’” May God, who does all things for those who hope in him, grant that we may all be found thus diligently employed! The brethren in bonds, the clergy, and the whole Church salute you: We all of us with earnest solicitude watch and pray for all who call on the name of the Lord. And we beseech you, in return, to be mindful of us also in your prayers.”

Several observations present themselves on this occasion. 1. It appears, that, both at Rome and Carthage, the reduced mode of episcopacy was the form of ecclesiastical government which gradually prevailed in the Christian world. It is not to be supposed that the whole body of Christians, either at Rome or at Carthage, was no more than what might be contained in one assembly.—The inference is obvious.

2. The Roman Church appears, in the beginning of Decius’s persecution at least, to have been in a much more thriving state than that of Carthage, and their clergy to have been models worthy of imitation in all ages.

3. The administration of discipline among the Christians, wisely tempered by tenderness and strictness, is truly admirable.

4. The work of the Divine Spirit also amongst them, infusing the largest charity, even to the laying down of their lives for the brethren, is manifest beyond contradiction. Now mark the spirit of a primitive pastor, full of charity and meekness, of zeal and prudence, in the following letter of Cyprian to his clergy:—

“Being hitherto preserved by the favour of God, I salute you, dearest brethren, and I rejoice to hear of your safety. As present circumstances permit not my presence among you, I beg you by your faith and by the ties of religion, to discharge your duties, in conjunction with mine also, that nothing be wanting either on the head of discipline or of diligence. I beg that nothing may be wanting to supply the necessities of those, who are imprisoned because of their glorious profession and avowal of God, or who labour under the pressures of indigence and poverty, since the whole ecclesiastical fund is in the hands of the clergy for this very purpose, that a number may have it in their power to relieve the wants of individuals.

* Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4.

† John x.

‡ John xxi.

* Luke xix. 19.

"I beg further, that you would use every prudential and cautious method to procure the peace of the Church; and if the brethren, in their charity, wish to confer with and to visit those pious suffering converts, whom the divine goodness hath thus far shone upon by such good beginnings, they should, however, do this cautiously, not in crowds, nor in a multitude; lest any odium should hence arise, and the liberty of admission be denied altogether; and lest while, through greediness, we aim at too much, we lose all. Consult therefore and provide, that this may be done safely and with discretion; so that the presbyters, one by one, accompanied by the deacons in turn, may successively minister to them, because the change of persons visiting them is less liable to breed suspicion. For in all things we ought to be meek and humble, as becomes the servants of God, to redeem the time, to have a regard for peace, and to provide for the people. Most dearly beloved and longed-for, I wish you all prosperity, and entreat you to remember us. Salute all the brethren, Victor the deacon, and those that are with us, salute you."^{*}

The numerous defections which took place must have penetrated deeply the fervent and charitable spirit of Cyprian. Not only very many of the laity, but part of the clergy also had been seduced. "I could have wished," says he,† "dearest brethren, to have had it in my power to salute your whole body sound and entire; but as the melancholy tempest has, in addition to the fall of so many of the people, also affected part of the clergy,—sad accumulation of our sorrow! we pray the Lord, that, by divine mercy, we may be enabled to salute you at least,—whom we have known hitherto to stand firm in faith and virtue,—as sound and unshaken followers of Christ for the time to come.—Though the cause loudly called on me to hasten my return to you; first, on account of my own desire and regret for the loss of your company,—a desire which burns strongly within me;—in the next place, that we might, in full council, settle the various objects in the Church which require attention; yet, on the whole, to remain still concealed seemed more advisable on account of other advantages which pertain to the general safety, an account of which our dear brother Tertullus will give you; who, agreeably to that care which he em-

ploya in divine works with so much zeal, was also the adviser of this council, that I should act with caution and moderation, and not rashly commit myself to the public view in a place where I had so often been sought and called for.

"Relying therefore on your affection and conscientiousness, of which I have had good experience, I exhort and charge you by these letters, that you, whose situation is less dangerous and invidious, would supply my lack of service. Let the poor be attended to as much as possible,—those I mean, who have stood the test of persecution: suffer them not to want necessities; lest indigence do that against them which persecution could not. I know the charity of the brethren has provided for very many of them:—yet,—as I wrote to you before, even while they were in prison,—if any persons do want meat or clothing,* let their necessities be supplied."

In the sequel of this epistle, he shows a deep knowledge of the depravity of the human heart, which is very apt to be puffed up with vain-glory and self-conceit, on the consciousness of having well performed our part in any respect. I cannot forbear transcribing the following practical rules of humility.

"Let them know,—that they must be instructed and taught by you;—that the doctrines of Scripture require subordination in the people to their pastors;—that they should cultivate an humble, modest, and peaceable demeanour;—and that those who have been gloriously bold in the avowal of their faith, should be equally exemplary in all the branches of Christian conduct.—The harder trial yet remains:—The Lord saith, 'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.'† Let them imitate the Lord, whose humility never shone more than at the eve of his passion, when he washed his disciples' feet. The Apostle Paul too, after repeated sufferings, still continued mild and humble. His elevation to the third heaven begat in him no arrogance; neither, says he, 'did we eat any man's bread for nought, but laboured and travailed night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you.'‡

"All these duties do you instil into the minds of the brethren: and,—because he,

* It hence appears that a number of them had been released.

† Matthew x. 22.

‡ 2 Thess. iii. 8.

* Epia. 4.

† Epia. 5.

who humbles himself, shall be exalted.—now is the time more particularly that they should fear the snares of the enemy of souls, who loves to attack even the strongest, and to revenge the disgrace which he has already sustained from them. The Lord grant that, in due season, I may be enabled to visit my people again; and to exhort them to useful purpose. For I am grieved to hear that some of them run about idly, foolishly, and insolently; or give themselves up to strife; and even pollute, by fornication, those members which had confessed Christ; and are not willing to be subject to the deacons or presbyters, but seem to act as if they intended, by the bad conduct of a few nominal Christians, to bring disgrace on the whole body. He is a true Christian indeed, on account of whom the Church need not blush, but glory.

* To the point, concerning which certain presbyters wrote to me, I can answer nothing else; for, from the beginning of my appointment to this See, I determined to do nothing without your consent and the consent of the people. But when, by the favour of God, I shall have returned to you,—we will treat in common of all things.*

In the next letter* he dwells on the same subject, namely, the ill conduct of some of the confessors. The use of good discipline in the Church of God; the benefits of sedate subjection in the members; the danger of pride and self-evaluation; and—the deceitfulness of the human heart, are well stated, and in exceedingly strong terms.

After having congratulated his people on the steadiness of their confession, he reminds them of the necessity of perseverance, since faith itself and the new birth conduct us to life eternal, not merely as once received, but as preserved. He reminds them, that the Lord regards him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at his words;—and he rejoices to find that the greatest part of the confessors thus adorned the Gospel.† But he had heard that some of them were puffed up: To these he exhibits the mild, charitable, and humble spirit of the Lamb of God: “And dare,” says he, “any one, who now lives by sin and in

him, to lift himself up with pride?—He that is least among you, the same shall be great. How execrable ought those immoralities and indecencies to appear among you, which we have heard of with the deepest sorrow of heart!”—He then repeats what he had before mentioned of the lasciviousness of some.

“Contentions and strifes ought to have no place among you, since the Lord has left us his peace. I beseech you abstain from reproaches and abuse;—for he who speaks what is peaceable, and good, and just, according to the precepts of Christ, daily imitates his Lord and Master.—We renounced the world when we were baptized; but now we truly and indeed renounce the world, when, upon being tried and proved by God, we scruple not to give up our own wills to follow the Lord; and to stand and live in his faith and fear. Let us strengthen one another with mutual exhortations, and strive to grow in the Lord;—that when, in his mercy, he shall give us that peace and tranquillity which he has promised, we may return to the Church as new men;—and that both our brethren and the gentiles may receive us improved in holy conduct; and may admire the excellency of the morals and discipline of those very Christians, who had astonished them by their fortitude during the persecution.”

The mind of Cyprian, full of the fear of God, and reflecting, from a comparison of Christian precepts with the bad practice of many, how exceedingly his people had provoked the Lord before the persecution, was vehemently incited to stir them up to repentance.—He addresses them from his recess,* as follows:—“Though I am sensible, dearest brethren, that as we all live in the obedient fear of God, you are instant in prayers, yet I also admonish you that we ought to breathe out our souls to God, not only in words, but also in fasting, tears, and every method of supplication. In truth, we must understand and confess that the apostasy which, in so large a degree, has wasted our flock and still wastes it, is the proper consequence of our sin.”

He then goes on to speak of their practical corruptions, as he does in his treatise concerning the lapsed. “And what plagues, what stripes do we not deserve, since even confessors, who ought to be patterns to the rest, are quite disorderly!

* Epist. 6. ad Rogatianum presbyterum et ceteros confessores.

† A confessor means one who openly avowed himself to be a convert to Christianity, &c. See note, p. 174, infra.

* Epist. 7.

Hence, while the proud and indecent boasting of their confession puffs up some, torments have come upon us, and torments unremitted;—tedious and most distressing; and so protracted as to exclude even the comfort of death itself!

“Let us pray with our whole heart for mercy: and if the answer to our prayers be slow because we have deeply offended;—let us knock; for to him that knocketh it shall be opened, when prayers, groans, and tears beat at the door.”—He then records some visions;—which, as they rather suit the dispensation of that age in which miracles were by no means wanting, I pass over.

“Our Master himself prayed for us; because though himself no sinner, yet he bore our sins. And if he laboured and watched on account of us and of our sins, how much more should we be urgent in prayer! Brethren—let us first entreat our Lord himself, and then through him we may obtain favour with God the Father. The Father himself corrects and takes care of us, in the midst of all pressures, provided we remain firm in the faith, and stick close to his Christ;—as it is written, ‘Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword!’ None of these can separate believers: Nothing can pluck away those, who adhere closely to his body and blood.—Persecution is the examination and trial of our heart. God would have us to be sifted and tried; nor was ever his help wanting in trials, to those who believe. Let our eyes be lifted up to heaven, lest earth with its enticements deceive us. If the Lord see us humble and quiet, lovingly united, and corrected by the present tribulation, he will deliver us. Correction has come first; pardon will follow: Let us only continue to pray in steady faith; and to behave like men placed between the ruins of the fallen and the remains of those who are in fear,—between a multitude of the sick, and the few who have escaped a devouring pestilence.”

Thus the persecution at Carthage appears to have been very dreadful; but mostly so on account of the number of apostates: The Christian faith, patience, and magnanimity of Cyprian and of a small remnant were in full exercise.

The persecutors endeavoured to lessen the number of Christians by banishing from Carthage all those who confessed

Christ: but this not answering their purpose, they proceeded to cruel torments. Cyprian, hearing that some had expired under their sufferings, and that others were still in prison yet alive, wrote to these last a letter of encouragement and consolation. Their limbs had been sorely mangled and torn, so that they appeared like one continued wound; yet they remained firm in the faith and love of Jesus. One of them, Mappalicius, amidst his torments, said to the proconsul, “Tomorrow you shall see a contest for a prize.”—He alluded to the crown of martyrdom; and, what he uttered in faith, the Lord fulfilled:—He lost his life in the conflict on the next day.*

So eagerly and so firmly was the mind of Cyprian fixed on heavenly things; and so completely lifted up above the world, that he ardently exulted and triumphed amidst those scenes of horror. He describes the martyrs and confessors as wiping away the tears of the Church, while she was bewailing the ruins of her sons. He represents even Christ himself as looking down with complacency; fighting and conquering in his servants; and giving strength to believers in proportion to their faith:—“He was present in the contest,” says he; “He encouraged, corroborated, animated his warriors. And he, who once conquered death for us, always conquers in us.” Toward the close of his epistle, he consoles, with suitable arguments, those who had not yet been crowned with martyrdom, but were prepared for it in spirit.

The joy of Cyprian, on account of the faithfulness of the martyrs, was, however, considerably damped by the disorderly conduct, which began to take place in his absence. Those, who had suffered tortures for Christ, and were on the point of martyrdom, and to whom it was usual to make application for the presentation of petitions, wrote to him and requested, that the consideration of the cases of lapsed Christians might be deferred till the persecution was stopped, and the bishop was restored to his Church. In the mean time, several of these lapsed brethren offered themselves to certain presbyters of Carthage to be received again into communion; and they were actually re-admitted to the Lord’s Supper without any just evidence of their repentance.—The bishop dissembled not

his pleasure on this occasion: He confessed, he had long borne with these disorders for the sake of peace, till he thought it his duty to bear with them no longer.—He said, “that it was quite unparliamentary to transact these things without the consent of the bishop:”—and that, even in lesser offences, a regular time of penitence was exacted of the members;—a certain course of discipline took place,—they made open confession of their sins, and were re-admitted to communion by the imposition of hands of the bishop and his clergy.”—He directs that the irregular practice might be stopped, till, on his return, every thing should be settled with propriety.

Some of the martyrs themselves, it appears,* acted very inconsiderately in this business, and gave to lapsed persons commendatory papers, conceived in general terms. Cyprian wishes them to express the NAMES of the persons, and to give no such recommendations to any but those, of whose sincere repentance they had some good proof; and even in that case to refer the ultimate cognizance of such matters to the bishop.

Every thing has two handles. Cyprian† has been represented as stretching the episcopal power beyond its due bounds. I see no evidence that he exceeded the powers of his predecessors. A pious care for the good of souls,—not any ambition for the extension of his own authority, seems to influence his mind in these affairs; but of this, the learned reader must judge for himself, who will take the pains to examine his epistles with attention. Let any man peruse the following letter; and consult his own heart as he goes along, whether it be the language of a tender father of the Church, or of an imperious lord.

CYPRIAN TO THE BRETHREN OF THE
LAITY, GREETING.

“I know from my own feelings, dearest Brethren, that you must grieve and bitterly bewail over the ruins of our people, as I sincerely join with you in sad grief and lamentation for every one of them: I experience the truth of what the blessed Apostle said, ‘Who is weak, and I am not weak! Who is offended, and

I burn not!’ And again, ‘If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it.’ I sympathize and condole with our brethren, who have lapsed through the violence of persecution: It is true, their wounds give me the most acute pain: they absolutely break my heart: but, divine grace can heal them.—Still I think we should not be in a hurry; nor do any thing incautiously and precipitately; lest, while we rashly re-admit them into communion, the divine displeasure be more grievously incurred. The blessed martyrs have written to us, ‘begging that their petitions in favour of the lapsed may be examined, when the Lord shall vouchsafe peace to us, and we shall be able to return to the Church.’—Certainly THEN every case shall be examined in your own presence, and with the concurrence of your own judgments.—But I hear that some presbyters,—neither mindful of the precepts of the Gospel,—nor considering what the martyrs have written to us,—and also in contempt of the episcopal authority, have already begun to communicate with the lapsed, and to administer the Lord’s Supper to them, in defiance of that legitimate order by which alone re-admissions are ever to be regulated. For, if in lesser faults this discipline should be observed, much more ought it in evils, like these, which radically affect the Christian profession itself. Our presbyters and deacons are bound to admonish the people in this matter, that they may cherish the sheep intrusted to them, and instruct them in the way of imploring mercy by the divine rules.—I have too good an opinion of the peaceable and humble disposition of our people to believe that they would have ventured to take such a step, had they not been seduced by the adulatory arts of some of the clergy.

“Do you, then, take care of each of them; and, by your judgment and moderation, according to the sacred precepts, moderate the spirits of the lapsed: let none pluck off fruit, as yet unripe, with improvident precipitation; let none commit a vessel again to the deep, shattered already and leaky, till it be carefully re-fitted: let none put on his tattered garment, till he see it thoroughly repaired.—I beseech you also to attend to this advice, and to expect our return;—that when we shall come to you,—by the mercy of God,—we may, with the concurrence of other bishops, examine the letters and the petitions of the martyrs, in

* A further confirmation of the antiquity of a limited episcopacy in the Church of Christ.

† Epist. 10.

‡ Mosheim—Ecclesiastical History.

the presence of the confessors, according to the will of the Lord."

It is hence observable, that persons, whose religion had more of form than sincerity, and whose consciences were not altogether seared, acted in the same manner then as such do now;—that is, they were more hasty to gain the good will of men than of their Maker. They were ambitious of the favour of the martyrs of those times, who were unquestionably sound and pious Christians; and we shall see soon still stronger proof, that even men of eminent godliness are sometimes too apt to repay, with concessions of a dangerous nature, the professions of respect made to them by ambiguous characters. The Lord's Supper was then, as it is now, made by some an engine of self-righteous formality. And it is in cases of this nature that wholesome Church-discipline is very precious. The danger of false healing justly appeared great to Cyprian, nor can any thing be conceived more proper than the delay which he directed. Yet as the time was protracted to a more distant period than he expected, and as he was afraid that the sickly season of the hot weather might carry off some of the lapsed, he directs, in a subsequent letter,* "that any of the lapsed penitents whose lives might be in danger, should, by such Church officers as were authorized, be re-admitted into the Church." And he intreats his clergy to cherish the rest of the fallen Christians with care and tenderness.—He observes that the grace of the Lord would not forsake the humble.

His exhortations to his clergy were not without effect. They fell in with his views, and solicited the people to patience, modesty and real repentance.—They consulted him how they should act in certain critical cases: He referred them to his former letters; and repeated his ideas of the proper season of settling, in general, the concerns of the lapsed; at the same time he urged the indecency of some persons in expecting a re-admission into the Church before the return of those who were in exile, and were stripped of all their goods for the sake of the Gospel. "But, if they are in such excessive hurry," said the bishop, "it is in their own power to obtain even more than they desire. The battle is not yet over; the conflict is daily carrying on. If they cordially repent, and

the fire of divine faith burns in their breasts, he who cannot brook a delay, may, if he please, be crowned with martyrdom."

The African prelate was ever studious of preserving an intimate connexion with the Roman Church, where still the persecution raged and prevented the election of a successor to Fabian.

The next epistle is employed in giving them an account of his proceedings.

The bold neglect of discipline in Carthage proved a source of vexation to his mind in addition to his other trials, and called forth all the patience, tenderness, and fortitude of which he was possessed.—Lucian a confessor of Christ, sincere and fervent in faith, but injudicious, and too little acquainted with Christian precepts, undertook, in the name of the collective body of the confessors, to re-admit into communion all the lapsed who had applied to them;† and he wrote a very concise letter to Cyprian, in which he desires him to inform the rest of the bishops of what they had done, and expresses a wish that he may acquiesce in the views of the martyrs.—It cannot be denied,—that, on the one hand, a superstitious veneration for the character of a martyr and a confessor had grown up among these Africans;—and that, on the other,—those, who had suffered for Christ in persecution, were apt to be elated with spiritual pride, and to assume an authority which by no means belonged to them;—so dangerous a thing is it to be unacquainted with Satan's devices,—and so prone in all ages are even professors of true religion to walk in the steps of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.‡

Cyprian sent the copy of this letter to his clergy at Carthage; and prefaced his observations on it in the following pointed manner: "To this man will I look, saith the Lord, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word. This character becomes us all, particularly those who have fallen, that they may appear before the Lord humble and penitent indeed." He then added,—"that the bishops, his brethren, had agreed with him in opinion to defer the consideration of the cases of the lapsed to a council to be held by them in general, after that it should have pleased God to restore peace to his Church;"—

* Epist. 12.

* Epist. 17.

† Epist. 18.

‡ See Numbers xvi.

and he urged them "to support these views." He sent them, at the same time, a copy of a correspondence between Caldonius, an African bishop, and himself.

It is not known in what place Caldonius lived; but he, like Cyprian, was very cautious in restoring the lapsed to communion. Some, however, of his Church, having apostatized by sacrificing to the pagan gods, were called to a second trial; when they recovered their ground; and, in consequence, were driven into banishment and stripped of their property. Caldonius expressed his opinion that such should be re-admitted. Felix, a presbyter, his wife Victoria, and one Lucian, thus lost their possessions, which were forfeited to the Imperial treasury. A woman, also, named Bona, who was dragged by her pagan husband to sacrifice, was, while they held her hands, compelled to a seeming compliance, but she lately cleared her integrity by saying, "I did it not,—ye have done it." She also was banished. Caldonius having stated the facts and given his own opinion, asks the advice of Cyprian, who acquiesces in his judgment; and adds, that he wished all the lapsed, who then caused him so much affliction, were disposed to retrieve their Christian character by these methods, rather than to increase their faults by pride and insolence.*

A confessor, named Celerinus, who lived in some part of Africa—most probably in banishment—was much grieved on account of the apostasy of his two sisters, Numeris and Caudina. He wept night and day in sackcloth and ashes on their account; and hearing of Lucian still being in prison and reserved for martyrdom at Carthage, he wrote to him to intreat that either he himself or any of his suffering brethren,—particularly, whom ever should first be called to martyrdom,—would restore them to the Church. He begs the same favour for Eteusa also; who, though she had not sacrificed, had given money to be excused from the act.† He assures Lucian of the sincerity of their repentance; and says, it was evidenced by their kindness and assiduity in attending on the suffering brethren. He, manifestly, attributes too much to the character of martyrs, in affirming, that "because they were friends and witnesses of Christ, they had therefore a

power of indulging all requests of this sort." This letter and the answer of Lucian contain a mixture of good and evil: they exhibit true grace tarnished with pitiable ignorance and superstition. Both Celerinus and Lucian were, doubtless, good men;—but we are more disposed to make candid allowances for the defects of our own age than for those of preceding times.

The conduct of Lucian affords a memorable and lamentable instance of the weakness of human nature even in a regenerate spirit. His answer to Celerinus* displays the most consummate fortitude,—and this,—as far as appears—grounded, in the main, on the true faith and love of Christ. The existence of a deplorable and subtle spirit of pride, in some degree, is, perhaps, not to be denied; but this holy man was certainly not aware of the alloy.—He describes himself and his companions as shut up and pressed together excessively close in two small cells, and also greatly suffering from hunger, thirst, and intolerable heat. He mentions a number of them as already killed in prison; and adds that, in a few days, he himself must expire. "For five days," says he, "we have received very little bread; and the water is apportioned to us by measure."—Such were the sufferings of this persecution.—Lucian speaks of all this in a cool, and most unaffected manner;—like one, whose mind was lifted up above the world and its utmost malice, and patiently expected a blessed immortality. As to the petition of Celerinus in favour of his sisters, he informs him that Paul the martyr, who had lately suffered, had visited him while yet in the body, and had said,—“Lucian, I say to thee before Christ, that if any person after my decease beg of you to be restored to the Church, do you, in my name, grant his request.” Lucian extends this generosity to the greatest height; and refers him to the general letter, which he had already written in behalf of the lapsed. Yet he owns, they ought to explain their cause before the bishop, and make a confession. It is very plain, however, that he attributes, in this matter, a sort of superior dignity to Paul, to himself, and to the other martyrs; and, no doubt, the vain-glory of martyrdom was much augmented by the excessive regard which now began to be shown to

* Epist. 18, 19.

† Epist. 20.

• Epist. 21.

sufferers.—These and similar facts constrain the reluctant historian to acknowledge, that the corruptions of superstition, in giving immoderate honour to saints and martyrs, which afterwards, through Satan's artifice and delusion, grew to the enormous pitch of idolatry itself, had already entered the Church, and contaminated the simplicity and the purity of Christian faith and dependence. Yet this concession,—it must be remembered,—implies no suspicion of hypocrisy either in the martyrs or in their admirers. This same Lucian was a man of true, of substantial piety.—He wept and lamented exceedingly on account of the lapsed women; and had the fear of God constantly before his eyes. Probably, he was not very judicious: his letter is confused and perplexed beyond measure; nor is it now easy to say, how far the obscurity is to be ascribed to the want of a clear understanding, or to his very distressed circumstances, or to the corruption of the text.

It is evident that a spirit extremely dangerous to the cause of piety, humility, and wholesome discipline, was spreading fast in the African Church. Celerinus himself, who had been a confessor,* owns that the cause of his sister had been heard by the clergy of her Church,—at that time, it seems, destitute of a bishop;—who had deferred the settlement of it till the appointment of the chief pastor;—but the precipitation of men would brook no delay.

The eyes of all prudent and more discerning persons in the Church were fixed on the bishop of Carthage in this emergency. The danger of the loss of the Gospel itself, by substituting a dependence on saints instead of Christ Jesus, forcibly struck his mind. His connexion with the Roman clergy, and the superior regard to discipline which there prevailed, was of some service on the occasion; and, in his correspondence with them,† he compares the immoderate assuming conduct of Lucian, with the modesty of the martyrs Mappalican and Saturninus, who had abstained from such practices: The former had written only in behalf of his

own mother and sister; and the latter, who had been tortured and imprisoned, had yet sent out no letters whatever of this kind. Lucian, he complains, every where furnished the lapsed with letters testimonial for their reception into the Church, written with his own hand in the name of Paul while alive, continued to furnish them after his death, and declared that that martyr had directed him to do so;—though he should have known, says Cyprian, that he ought to obey the Lord rather than his fellow-servant.

A young person, named Aurelius, who had suffered torments, was seized with the same vanity, but was unable to write; and Lucian wrote many papers in his name.

Cyprian complains of the odium thus incurred by the bishops. In some cities, he takes notice how the multitude had forced the bishops to re-admit the lapsed; but he blames those rulers of the Church for want of faith and Christian constancy. In his own diocese he had occasion for all his fortitude. Some, who were formerly turbulent, were now much more so, and insisted on being speedily re-admitted. He observes that baptism is performed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that remission of past sins is then received; and then he complains that the name of Paul, in effect, is inserted in the place of the Trinity. He applies, on this occasion, St. Paul's well-known holy execration denounced in the beginning of the Epistle to the Galatians. He owns his obligation to Rome for the letters of their clergy, which were well calculated to withstand these abuses.

He wrote a congratulatory letter* to the confessors Moyses and Maximus, whose faith and zeal, united with modesty and with the strictest attention to discipline, he had formerly much commended; and he now thanks them for the epistolary advice, which they had given to the African confessors. In their answer† they appear transported with holy joy, and elevated with the heavenly prospects before them. They quote the New Testament Scriptures relative to these things; and expresses such strength of faith, hope, and charity, as demonstrates the real power of divine grace to have been possessed by them in a very emi-

* By a confessor, in the language of those times, we are always to understand a person who has publicly professed or confessed himself to be a Christian, when called upon by the heathens to sacrifice to their gods, or otherwise to worship them.

† Epis. 32.

* Epis. 24.

† Epis. 25.

‡ Matt. v. 10, 11. Luke vi. 23. Matt. x. 18. Rom. viii. 35.

ment manner. Their love of the divine word and of just discipline appears no less great than their zeal and ardour for martyrdom. They observe how deeply and how widely spread the evil of defection had been; and they conclude with very just observations on the right method of treating the lapsed, in perfect agreement with Cyprian. Greatness of mind, a high sense of the importance of order, a heavenly warmth of temper, and an accuracy of judgment, are equally and abundantly evident in this epistle:—Such endowments existing in just proportion prove that the work of the Holy Spirit was very sound in these excellent men.

Cyprian now wrote to the lapsed themselves; and rebuked the precipitation of some, and exposed the injustice of their claims, since they acted as if they took to themselves the whole title of the Church: he commended the modesty of others, who refused to take advantage of the indiscreet recommendation of the martyrs, and who wrote to him in the language of penitents;—whence it appears that the folly of the lapsed was by no means universal.*

Gaius Diddensis, one of the presbyters of Cyprian, undertook, along with his deacon, against the sense of the rest of the clergy, to communicate with the lapsed. Repeated admonitions availed not to a reformation. As the bishop was sensible that the common people, for whose salvation he was solicitous, were deceived by these things, he commends his clergy for refusing communion with so obstinate and irregular a presbyter and deacon.—He again intimates his intention of judging all things in full council upon his return; and intreats them to co-operate in the mean time, with his views in the maintenance of discipline. In writing again to the Roman clergy, he declares his determination of acting as God had directed his ministers in the Gospel, if the contumacious were not reformed by his and by their admonitions;†

The Roman clergy console affectionately with Cyprian:—"Our sorrow," say they, "is doubled, because you have no rest from these pressing difficulties of the persecution; and because the immoderate petulance of the lapsed has proceeded to the height of arrogance. But, though these things have grievously afflicted our spirits; yet your firmness and

evangelical strictness of discipline have moderated the load of vexation: You have both restrained the wickedness of certain persons; and also, by exhorting them to repentance, have shown them the wholesome way to salvation.—We are astonished that they should proceed to such lengths, in a time so mournful, so unseasonable as the present;—that they should not so much as ask for re-communication with the Church; but claim it as a right;—and even affirm that they are already forgiven in heaven. Never cease, brother,—in your love of souls,—to moderate and restrain these violent spirits; and to offer the medicine of truth to the erroneous, though the inclination of the sick be often opposite to the prudent industry of the physician. These wounds of the lapsed are fresh, and produce considerable tumours; but we feel assured, that, in process of time, their heat and violence will subside;—and the patients themselves will then be thankful for that delay, which was absolutely necessary for a wholesome cure, provided there be none to arm them with weapons against themselves, and, by perverse instructions, to demand for them the deadly poison of an over hasty restoration: for we cannot think that they would all* have dared to have claimed their admission so petulantly, without the encouragement of some persons of ecclesiastical influence. We know the faith, the good order, the humility of the Carthaginian Church;—whence we have been surprised in noticing certain harsh reflections made against you in a certain epistle, when we have formerly had repeated proof of your mutual charity."

They proceed to give the most wholesome advice to the lapsed; and in truth, the whole conduct of the Roman clergy, at this season, reflects the highest honour on their wisdom and their affection; and affords the most pleasing proofs of the good state of that church at that time. The same can by no means be said of Cyprian's:—they were,—as we have seen,—a declining people before his appointment to the See; and the scourge of persecution produced vast numbers of apostates.—In those days of discipline, the lapsed, by their eagerness for re-admission, showed the same dispositions of

* They must have understood that by much the major part at least of the lapsed were guilty of this evil.

* Epist. 26. † Epist. 37. ‡ Epist. 28.

selfishness and of pride, which, in our times, are evinced by persons wishing to hear nothing but comfort preached to them,—but finding fault with ministers who dare not speak false peace;—and by unsoundly healing themselves. We are perfectly lax in point of discipline:—Who regards its menaces against the disorderly?—With the first Christians this was an awful concern.—The same depravity of nature seems now to work on corrupt minds in another way; but so as still to exercise the patience and fortitude of godly ministers, who, by persevering in their duty, and not giving way to the unreasonable humours of their people in things of importance, will find, in the end, a wholesome issue even with many of their most unpromising and froward hearers.

An African, named Privatus, who had left his country and travelled to Rome, solicited to be there received as a Christian. Cyprian had mentioned him to the Roman clergy, and pointed out his real and dangerous character. In the close of this admirable letter* they inform him that, before they had received his cautionary letters, they had detected the impostor. At the same time they lay down a golden maxim, “that we all ought to watch for the body of the whole Church, diffused through various provinces.”—It was this unity and uniformity of the Christian Church, which hitherto had preserved it, under God, from the infection of heresies. None of these were yet able to mix themselves with the “body of Christ:”† and the Church,—instead of being broken into small handfuls of distinct sets of persons, all glorying in having something peculiarly excellent, and prone to despise their neighbours,—as yet knew no other name than that of CHRISTIAN: numbers and diversity of place alone prevented their assembling all together; for they were one people. In Italy and Africa the union at this time appears very salubrious: and the vigorous spirit and sound understanding of Cyprian was enabled to apply the solid graces of the Roman Church as medicinal for the reformation of his own disordered flock.

The Roman clergy, in a second letter,‡ take notice of St. Paul's enlogium of

their Church in the beginning of his epistle;—“that their faith was spoken of through the whole world,” and they express their desire of treading in the steps of their Christian predecessors. They mention the cases of Libellatici,* which were two-fold; 1st, Of those who delivered in written testimonials to heathen magistrates, in which they abjured the Gospel; and who, at the same time, by paying money, obtained the privilege of not sacrificing to the gods.—2dly, Of those who procured friends to do those same things for them. Both kinds, those last, as well as those who had actually sacrificed, were censured by the Roman clergy as lapsed persons. They mention likewise the letters sent by the Roman confessors into Africa to the same purport, and express their joy on account of the consistency of their conduct in matters of discipline, with their sufferings for the faith. They declare their agreement in opinion with Cyprian,—to defer the settlement of these affairs till some general measure could be planned for this purpose, after peace should be restored. “Behold,” say they, “almost the whole world is laid waste:—Fragments of the fallen lie in every place:—With one and the same counsel, with unanimous prayers and tears, let us,—who seem hitherto to have escaped the ruins of this visitation, as well as those, who have not stood entirely faithful during the persecution, intreat the Divine Majesty, and beg peace in the name of the whole Church: let us cherish, guard, and arm one another with mutual prayers: let us supplicate for the lapsed, that they may be raised: let us pray for those who stand, that they may not be tempted to their ruin; let us pray also, that those, who have fallen, may become sensible of the greatness of the crime, and may have the wisdom not to wish for a crude and momentary medicine, and that they may not disturb the yet fluctuating state of the Church,—lest they should appear to aggravate our distresses by exciting INTERNALLY seditious and inflammatory commotions. Let them knock at the doors, but not break them. Let

* So called from libellus—which here means a concise written document, signed by the person whom it concerned, and containing an account of his religion: In many cases, it was only signed by some creditable and well-known friends.—An evasive contrivance—for the purpose of quieting insincere consciences, not yet quite hardened!

• Epis. 29.

† Coloss. i. 24. His body's sake, which is the Church.

‡ Epis. 80.

them go to the threshold of the Church, but not leap over it. Let them watch at the gates of the heavenly camp, but with that modesty which becomes those who remember they have been deserters. Let them arm themselves indeed with the weapons of humility, and resume that shield of faith which they dropped through the fear of death; but so that they may be armed against the devil,—not against that very Church, which laments over their fall."

The want of a bishop at Rome was an additional reason for delay. They speak of certain bishops who lived in their neighbourhood, and also of others, who, through the flame of persecution, had fled to them from distant provinces,—who all concurred in the same views.

There was a very young man, named Aurelius, whom Cyprian speaks of as greatly excelling in the graces of Christianity. He had twice undergone the rage of persecution for the sake of Christ: Borendment was his first punishment, and torture the second. The bishop had ordained this youth a reader in the Church of Carthage; and he apologizes on account of the peculiar circumstances of the case of the times, for his not having previously consulted his presbyters and deacons. He beseeches them to pray, that both their bishop and good Aurelius may be restored to the exercise of their respective functions.—I cannot but hence observe, how exact and orderly the ideas of ordination were in those times.—It is not to the advantage of godliness among us, that persons can now be introduced to very high offices in the ministry without much previous trial, ceremony, or difficulty.*

Celerinus was also ordained a reader by the same authority.† However weak in judgment he may appear from the transactions between him and Lucian already stated, the man suffered with great zeal for the sake of Christ. The very beginning of the persecution found him a ready combatant. For nineteen days he had remained in prison fettered and starved; but he persevered, and escaped at length without martyrdom. His grandfather and two of his uncles had suffered for Christ, and their anniversaries were celebrated by the Church.

It seems, that Cyprian thought proper to reward with honourable establishments

in the Church those who had suffered with the greatest faithfulness in the persecution, which was now drawing to a close. Numidicus was advanced to the office of presbyter. He had attended* a great number of martyrs who were murdered partly with stones and partly by fire. His wife, sticking close by his side, was burnt to death with the rest: He himself, half burnt, buried with stones, and left for dead, was found afterwards by his daughter; and, through her care, he recovered. Probably, this last case was the effect of the tumultuary rage of a persecuting populace: The ferocity of many in those times did not permit them to wait for legal orders.—Who can tell the number of Christian sufferers, which this mode of oppression must have added to the list of martyrs!

Amidst all these cares, the charity and diligence of Cyprian towards his flock were unremitted. The reader who loves the annals of genuine and active godliness, will not be wearied in seeing still fresh proofs of it in extracts of two letters to his clergy.†

"Dear brethren, I salute you: By the grace of God, I am still safe; and I wish to come soon to you;—that our mutual desire, and that of all the brethren, may be gratified. Whenever, on the settlement of your affairs, you shall write to me that I ought to come, or, if the Lord should condescend to make it plain to me before, then I will come to you; for where can I have more happiness and joy, than there, where God appointed me both first to become a believer, and also to grow in faith! I beseech you, take diligent care of the widows, of the sick, and of all the poor; and supply also strangers, if any be indigent, with what is needful for them, out of my proper portion, which I left with Rogatian the presbyter. And lest that should, by this time, be all spent, I have sent by Narcissus the Acolyth,‡ another sum of money to the same presbyter, that you may the more readily and largely supply the distressed.

"Though you have been frequently admonished by my letters to show all care for those, who have gloriously confessed the Lord, and are in prison, yet I must repeatedly intreat your atten-

* Epis. 33.

† Epis. 34.

* Epis. 35.

† Epis. 36, 37.

‡ An inferior officer of the Church, signifying an attendant.

tion to the same thing. I wish circumstances would permit my presence among you: With the greatest pleasure and readiness would I discharge these solemn duties of love and affection towards our brethren. But—Do you represent me.—A decent care for the internment, not only of those who died in torture, but also of such as died under the pressures of confinement, is necessary. For, whoever hath submitted himself to torture and to death, under the eye of God, hath already suffered all that God would have him to suffer.—Mark also the days in which they depart this life, that we may celebrate their commemoration among the memorials of the martyrs;—though our most faithful and devoted friend Tertullus,—who agreeably to his usual exactness and care, attends to their obsequies,—hath written, still writes to me, and signifies the days in which the blessed martyrs are transmitted to immortality.—Their memorials are here celebrated, and I hope shortly, under Divine Providence, to be able to celebrate them with you. Let not your care and diligence be wanting for the poor, who have stood firm in the faith, and have fought with us in the Christian warfare. Our affectionate care and attention to them are the more requisite, because neither their poverty nor persecution have driven them from the love of Christ.”

Every one knows into what idolatry these commemorations of martyrs afterwards degenerated.—But I observe few or no signs of it in the days of Cyprian.

In addition to other evils, the providence of God now thought fit to exercise the mind of Cyprian with one of the most distressing calamities which can happen to a lover of peace and charity,—the rise of a schism.

There* existed in the Church of Carthage a person of a very exceptionable character, named Felicissimus, who had long been a secret enemy of the bishop. By the same artifices and blandishments which seditious persons make use of in all ages, this man had enticed some of the flock to himself; and he held communion with them on a certain mountain. Among these and in their neighbourhood, there arrived several discreet brethren, who were authorized by Cyprian to discharge the debts of poor Chris-

tians; and to furnish them with small sums of money to begin business again; and also to make a report of their ages, conditions, and qualities, that he might select such of them for ecclesiastical offices, as should be judged properly qualified. Felicissimus opposed and thwarted both these designs. Several of the poor, who came first to be relieved, were threatened by him with imperious severity, because they refused to communicate on the mountain. This man growing more insolent, and taking advantage of Cyprian's absence, whose return he speedily expected, because the persecution had nearly ceased at Carthage, raised an opposition against the bishop in form.—found means to unite a considerable party to himself,—and threatened all those persons, who did not choose to partake in the sedition.—Among other crimes, this sower of discord had been guilty of adultery; and he now saw no method of preventing an infamous excommunication, but that of setting up himself as a leader.—His second in this odious business was named Augendus, who did his utmost to promote the same views.—Cyprian, by letter, expressed his vehement sorrow on account of these evils, promised to take full cognizance of them on his return, and in the mean time he wrote to his clergy to suspend from communion Felicissimus and his abettors.—His clergy wrote to him in answer, that they had suspended the chiefs of the faction accordingly.*

In the meantime there were not wanting upright and zealous ministers, who instructed the people at Carthage.—Among these were distinguished Britius the presbyter, also Rogatian and Numidicus, confessors; and some deacons of real godliness. These warned their flocks of the evils of schism, and endeavoured to preserve peace and unity, and to recover the lapsed by wholesome methods.

In addition to their labours, Cyprian now wrote to the people themselves.† “For,” says he, “the malice and perfidy of some presbyters hath effected, that I should not be able to come to you before Easter.‡ But the source of the faction of Felicissimus is now discovered, and we are acquainted with the foundation on which it stands. His followers en-

* Epis. 39.

† Epis. 40.

‡ In what way they hindered his arriving sooner will appear afterwards.

* Epis. 38.

Account of
Felicissi-
mus.

courage certain confessors, that they should not harmonize with their bishop, nor observe ecclesiastical discipline faithfully and modestly. And as if it were too little for them to have corrupted the minds of confessors, and to have armed them against their pastor, and to have stained the glory of their confession, they turned themselves to poison the spirits of the lapsed, to keep them from the great duty of constant prayer, and to invite them to an unsound and dangerous re-admission. But I beseech you, brethren, watch against the snares of the devil: Be on your guard and work out your own salvation: this is a second and a different sort of persecution and temptation. The five seditious presbyters may be justly compared to the five pagan rulers, who lately, in conjunction with the magistrates, published some plausible arguments with a view of subverting souls. The same method is now tried, for the ruin of your souls, by the five presbyters with Felicissimus at their head: They teach you, that you need not petition;—that he who hath denied Christ, may cease to supplicate the same Christ whom he hath denied;—that repentance is not necessary; and in short, that every thing should be conducted in a novel manner, and contrary to the rules of the Gospel.

“ My banishment of two years, and my mournful separation from your presence; my constant grief and perpetual lamentation; and my tears flowing day and night, because the pastor whom you chose with so much love and zeal could not salute nor embrace you,—all this, it seems, was not a sufficient accumulation of sorrow.—To my distressed and exhausted spirit a still greater evil must be added,—that in so great a solitude I cannot, with propriety, come over to you. The threats and snarls of the perfidious oblige me to use caution; lest, on my arrival, the tumults should increase; and lest I myself, the bishop, who ought to provide in all things for peace and tranquillity, should seem to have afforded matter for sedition, and again to exasperate the miseries of the persecution. Most dear brethren, I beseech you do not give rash credit to the pernicious representations of those who put darkness for light: They speak, but not from the word of the Lord: They, who are themselves separated from the Church, promise to restore the lapsed.

“ There is one God, one Christ, one Church. Depart, I pray you, far from

these men, and avoid their discourses, as a plague and pestilence. They hinder your prayers and tears, by affording you false consolations. Acquiesce, I beseech you, in my counsel: I pray daily for you, and desire you to be restored to the Church by the grace of the Lord.—Join your prayers and tears with mine. But, if any person shall despise repentance, and betake himself to Felicissimus and to his faction, let him know that his re-admission into the Church will be impracticable.”

It is not possible, by a few extracts, to give a perfect idea of the glowing charity, which reigned in Cyprian's breast on this occasion. Whoever has attended to the imbecility of human nature, ever prone to consult ease, to humour selfish feelings, and to admit flattery, will see the difficult trials of patience, which faithful pastors, in all ages, have endured from the insidious arts of those who would heal the wounds of people falsely.—Uncharitable—and, imperious—are the usual epithets with which they are aspersed on account of their faithfulness.—But “ Wisdom is justified of her children.”

But there was also another character, who was a primary agent in these disagreeable scenes,—Novatus, a presbyter of Carthage, a man extremely scandalous and immoral.* His domestic crimes had been so notorious as to render him not only no longer fit to be a minister, but even unworthy to be received into lay-communion. The examination of his conduct was about to take place, when the breaking out of the persecution by Decius prevented it. He it was, who supported and cherished the views of Felicissimus and of the rest; and he appears, by his address and capacity, to have been extremely well qualified to produce much mischief in the Church. He could do it no service; because he was absolutely devoid both of honesty and conscience.—Felicissimus himself, though at first the estimable leader of the congregation on the mountain, gave way afterwards to one of the five presbyters, named Fortunatus, who was constituted bishop in opposition to Cyprian. Most of the five had been already branded with infamy for immoralities. Yet so deep is the corruption of human nature—that such characters usually find advocates, even where

Character
of Nova-
tus.

the light of the Gospel shines, and where there exist pastors of eminent sanctity. The fact is, pastors of this last description cause numerous enemies to themselves by irritating the corruptions of wicked men, which they constantly do by refusing to speak peace where there is no peace.—It is no slight proof of the strength of these evils, that even a persecution the most dreadful yet recorded in the annals of the Church, did not perfectly unite professors of Christianity in love. The pious reader will, hence, infer the necessity, which called for so severe a scourge to the Church; and will also remark the advantages thence accruing to the really faithful, either by happily removing them to rest out of a world of sin and vanity, or by promoting their sanctification, if their pilgrimage were prolonged.

Novatus, either unwilling to face the bishop of Carthage, or desirous to extend the mischiefs of schism, passed the sea and came to Rome. There he connected himself with a

Account of
Novatian.

priest, named Novatian, a friend of the confessor Moyses, who has been already mentioned, and whose sufferings at Rome were of a tedious nature. Novatus had the address and management to effect the separation of Novatian from the Church.—Moyses renounced all intercourse with his former friend and acquaintance on account of this conduct; and soon after died in prison, where he had been confined nearly a year. Doubtless, he entered into eternal glory at length, having left the evidence of modesty and peaceableness, in addition to his other more splendid virtues, as testimonies of his love to the Lord Jesus.

Novatus found the religious ideas of his new associate and partner ranged in extreme opposition to his own. Novatian had been a Stoic before he was a Christian; and he still retained the rigour of the sect to such a degree, that he disapproved of receiving those into the Church who once had lapsed, though they gave the sincerest marks of repentance. Full of these unwarranted severities, he exclaimed against the wise and well-tempered lenity of the Roman clergy in receiving penitents. Many of the clergy of Rome, who were still in prison for the faith;—and among these Maximus and others, to whom Cyprian had formerly written,—were seduced by this apparent zeal for Church-discipline; and they joined Novatian. His African tutor, with astonish-

ing inconsistency, after having stirred up a general indignation in his own country and against his own bishop on account of severity to the lapsed, now supported a party who complained of too much lenity at Rome. It is hard to say which of the two extremes is the worse:—Novatus defended both within the compass of two years;—and with equal pertinacity.

The Roman clergy thought it high time to stem the torrent. They had, for sixteen months,* with singular piety and fortitude governed the Church during one of its most stormy seasons. Schism was now added to persecution: The necessity of choosing a bishop grew more and more urgent; yet a bishop of Rome must, of course, be in the most imminent danger of martyrdom;—for Decius threatened all bishops with great haughtiness and asperity. Sixteen of them happened to be then at Rome, and these ordained Cornelius as the successor of Fabian. He was very unwilling to accept the office; but the people, who were present, approved of his ordination; and no step was to be neglected, which might be useful in withstanding the growing schism.—The life of Cornelius appears to have been worthy of the Gospel: Novatian, however, not only vented many calumnies against him, but also contrived, in a very irregular manner,† to be elected bishop in opposition.

Thus was formed the first body of Christians, who, in modern language, may be called **DISSENTERS**; that is, men, who separate from the general Church, not on grounds of doctrine, but of discipline.

The first
Dissent-
ters.

The Novatianists held no opinions contrary to the faith of the Gospel. It is certain from some writings of Novatian extant,‡ that their leader was sound in the doctrine of the Trinity. But the confessors, whom his pretensions to superior purity had seduced, returned afterwards to the communion of Cornelius, and mourned over their own credulity. In a letter of Cornelius to Fabius, bishop of Antioch, a few circumstances are occasionally mentioned, from which an idea of the state of the Church of Rome, at that

* Fleury, B. 6.

† See in Euseb. B. 6. Cornelius's letter concerning Novatian, whom Eusebius, by mistake, confounds with Novatus.

‡ See Waterland's Importance of the Trinity.

§ Epis. 43 and 49.

time may be collected.* There were under the bishop forty-six priests, seven deacons, seven sub-deacons, forty-two acolytes, fifty-two exorcists, readers, and porters, and upwards of fifteen hundred widows, and infirm or disabled persons.—"The number of the laity was," says he, "innumerable."—I don't know so authentic a memorial of the number of the Christians in those times.

In this letter he charges Novatian,—perhaps without sufficient warrant,—with having denied himself to be a priest during the heat of the persecution, and with obliging his separatists, when he administered to them the Lord's Supper, to swear to adhere to himself.—The party, however, at Rome daily lost ground: Nicomachus the deacon was among the very few persons of note there, who, after being seduced by the arts of Novatian, did not return into communion and peace with Cornelius.—Conscious of scandalous crimes,† this schismatic fled from Rome into Africa;—whether Novatus himself also returned; and there the Novatians found many adherents, and are said to have elected for themselves, as a sort of counter-bishop, a presbyter, named Maximus, who had been lately sent as deputy from Rome, by Novatian, to inform Cyprian of the new election; in opposition to that of Cornelius.—This same deputy, Cyprian had rejected from communion.

It would not have been worth while to have detailed these events so distinctly, but for the purpose of marking the symptoms of *declension* in the Church,—the unity of which was now broken for the first time; for it ought not to be concluded that all the Novatians were men void of the faith and love of Jesus. The artifices of Satan also, in pushing forward opposite extremes, are worthy of notice: The skillful tempter tries both the lax and the severe method of discipline. The former he finds more suitable to the state of Christianity in our times; but it could gain no solid footing in the third century. The Novatian schism stood at last on the ground of *excessive severity*;—a certain proof of the strictness of the ecclesiastical government then fashionable among Christians, and, of course, of great purity of life and doctrine having been prevalent among them: To refuse the re-admission

of penitents was a dangerous instance of pharisaical pride: but, in justice to Novatian, it ought to be mentioned, that he advised the exhorting of the lapsed to repentance, though he thought that they should then be left to the judgment of God. On the same plan he also condemned second marriages;—Extreme austerity and superstition were growing evils in this century; and they were cherished by false philosophy.

At length, Cyprian ventured out of his retreat and returned to Carthage. In what manner he there conducted himself, shall be the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER X.

CYPRIAN'S SETTLEMENT OF HIS CHURCH AFTER HIS RETURN, AND THE HISTORY OF THE WESTERN CHURCH TILL THE PERSECUTION UNDER GALLUS.

THE prudence of Cyprian had been so remarkable during the whole of the persecution of Decius, that we may fairly conclude he had ceased to apprehend any personal danger when he appeared again in public at Carthage. In fact, it was not the cessation of malice, but the distraction of public affairs, which put an end to this persecution. Decius, on account of the incursion of the Goths, was obliged to leave Rome; and God gave a respite to his servants, while men of the world were wholly taken up with resisting or mourning under their secular calamities.—After Easter a council‡ was held at Carthage, and the eyes of Christians were turned toward it: The Church was in a very confused state; and some settlement of it was expected under the auspices of Cyprian and the other bishops of Africa. At first, a short delay was occasioned on account of doubts which arose respecting the validity of the election of Cornelius.* But an exact information of the circumstances laid open the truth: The regularity of his appointment, and the violation of order in the schismatical ordination of Novatian, by some persons who were in a state of intoxication, appeared so clearly, that no room for hesitation was left: Novatian was rejected in the African synod;—Felicissimus, with his five presbyters, was condemned; and Cornelius was owned as

* About the middle of the third century.

† The Novatians called themselves *Cathari*, pure people.

‡ The election of Novatian.

VOL. I.

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* See Cornelius's letter in Euseb.

legitimate bishop of Rome.—And now the case of the lapsed, which had given so much disquietude, and which Cyprian had so often promised to settle in full council, was finally determined;—and with men, who feared God, it was no hard thing to adjust a due medium.—A proper temperature was used between the precipitation of the lapsed and the stoical severity of Novatian. Hence, tried penitents were restored, and the case of dubious characters was deferred; and yet every method of Christian charity was used to bring about and facilitate their repentance and re-admission.

Fortunatus preserved still a schismatical assembly. But both this bishop and his flock shrunk soon into insignificance. The Christian authority of Cyprian was restored. The Novatian party alone remained a long time after, in Africa and elsewhere, numerous enough to continue a distinct body of professing Christians. The very little satisfactory light, which Christian annals afford concerning these Dissenters, shall be given in its place. And, as I am convinced that the Almighty has not limited his creatures to any particular and strictly defined modes of Church government, I cannot be under much temptation to partiality.—The laws of historical truth have obliged me to state facts which prove their secession to have been unjustifiable; but that circumstance does not render it impossible that the Spirit of God might be with some of this people during their continuance as a distinct body of Christians.

Thus did it please God to make use of the vigour and perseverance of Cyprian in recovering the Church of Carthage from a state of most deplorable declension. First, she had lost her purity and piety to a very alarming degree; then, she was torn with persecution, and sifted by the storm so much that the greatest part of her professors apostatized: and, lastly, she was convulsed by schisms, through men's unwillingness to submit to the rules of God's own word in wholesome discipline and sincere repentance. On Cyprian's return, however, a new train of regulation was established by the council of Carthage; and unity was restored in a great measure: The accounts of the succeeding transactions are imperfect; but there is great reason to believe that the Church of God was much recovered in these parts.

Decius lost his life in battle in the

year two hundred and fifty-one, after having reigned thirty months.—A prince—neither deficient in abilities nor in moral virtues, but distinguished, during this whole period, by the most cruel persecution of the Church of God; he appears to have been bent on its ruin; but was stopped in his career by an overruling Providence.

Decius slain,
A. D. 251.

The Church was now allowed peace for a little time under Gallus, the successor of Decius.

There remain a few circumstances to be observed, which attended this persecution in the West, before we proceed to relate its effects in the Eastern Church.

Cyprian, zealous for the unity of the Church, informed Cornelius,* that certain persons came to Carthage from Novatian, who insisted on being heard as to some charges which they had to produce against Cornelius:—But,—that as sufficient and ample testimony had already been given in favour of Cornelius,—as a prudent delay had also been made,—and as the sense of the Church of Rome had been authentically exhibited, any further audience of the NOVATIANS had been refused.—These, he observes, strove then to make a party in Africa; and for this purpose solicited different towns and private houses. The council of Carthage informed them that they ought to desist from their obstinacy, and not to relinquish their mother Church; but to own, that a bishop being once constituted and approved by the testimony and judgment of his colleagues and of the people, another could not be lawfully set up in his room: and that therefore, if they intended to act peaceably and faithfully,—if they pretended to be the assertors of the Gospel of Christ,—they ought to return to the Church.

Though the ideas contained in this epistle may appear very repugnant to the habits of thinking contracted by many professors of godliness in our days, I see not, I own, on what principles they can be controverted. There is a medium between the despotism of idolatrous Rome and the extreme licentiousness of modern ecclesiastical polity.—Are not peace and unity precious things?—and ought not they to be preserved in the Church if possible?—Then why should not the decided sense of the majority prevail, where that

* Epia. 41.

mode of evangelically settling a Church has been usual, and where it is not contrary to the established laws of the country,—and lastly, where pastors sound in faith and decorous in manners have been appointed!—Can it be right for a small number of individuals to dissent—and that, on no better ground, than their own fancy and humour!• This is not keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.—Such, however, was the first origin of the Novatian schism.

Persons, who have been accustomed to approve the unrestrained and unscriptural manner of conducting religious communities, which now so unhappily prevails; who feel no pity for the Church of Christ, nor care how much her members be torn one from another, and who make no more difficulty of changing their pastors than their workmen; will not enter into the beauty of Cyprian's charitable concern for the unity of the Church. It is evident, union at Rome was as much on his heart as union at Carthage, because he considered Christ's body as one. He explains to Cornelius why he was not immediately acknowledged as bishop, and how he was honourably received on full information. He speaks of the Roman schism with horror; he represents the

Christian schismatics, as refusing the bosom and the embrace of their mother, and as setting up an adulterous head out of the Church. I attempt not to vindicate expressions which go to the length of a total condemnation of the persons of schismatics: Schism is not so deadly an evil as heresy; nor must we undertake to judge the HEARTS of others. But when all this is allowed,—Does not the zeal of Cyprian call for similar candour?—The mischief, which had just begun to show itself in Rome and Carthage, was then new in the Christian world. Before the time of this able and active prelate, no instance had happened of any separations made from the Church, except in the case of damnable heresies: Slight and tolerable inconveniences had not yet been thought sufficient reasons to justify such violent measures;—and, it must be owned, if really good men in all ages had possessed the same conscientious dread of the sin of Schism, it would have fared much better with vital Christianity; and, further, those separations which must of necessity be made, when false worship and false doctrine are prevalent, would have been treated with more respect in the world.

Encouraged with the success of his pacific labours at home, Cyprian endeavoured to heal the breaches of the Roman Christians. He was sensible that the example of the confessors, whom Novatian's appearance of superior piety in discipline had seduced, had occasioned a great defection. He wrote respectfully to his former correspondents, and assured them that the deepest sadness had possessed his breast on their account: he reminds them of the honour of their faithful sufferings: he intreats them to return to the Church; and points out the inconsistency of their glorious confession of Christ with their present irregularity. But so exactly attentive was Cyprian to order, that he first sent the letter to Cornelius, and ordered it to be read to him, and submitted to his consideration before he would suffer it to be sent to the confessors.* With the same cautious charity he explains again to Cornelius some things which had given umbrage to that prelate with respect to the delay of the acknowledgment of his ordination;†—These transactions appear to me to belong to my plan; and to be singularly instructive

• The author would by no means be understood here to encroach on the right of private judgment; but he laments sincerely that the evil of separation should have been considered by the Novatians as a trifling matter; and he, further, laments, that a spirit of the same kind should appear to prevail strongly in our own days.—Does, then, right and wrong,—will any one say,—depend upon numbers? Have not the few as undoubted a right to their own opinions as the many?—Such questions are often asked,—and with an air of triumph.—But, after all, whoever denied this right of opinion; this right to think?—It is the right of *every* man according to this right of opinion that is contested.—Let a man, for example, in his private judgment, prefer for his pastor or his bishop some person different from him who has been elected by the majority.—Let him privately show this preference at the time of giving his suffrage;—but let him remember to propose peaceably in the appointment of the person elected; and not endeavour to divide the Church of Christ by placing a rejected candidate or some other favourite at the head of a faction in opposition to the election of,—perhaps,—a truly godly and religious man.

But in all this the author supposes either the *Lex scripta* or the *Lex non scripta* of the church to authorize ecclesiastical appointments by election.

† Epist. 42.

* Epist. 43, 44.

† Epist. 45.

tive.—The conduct of this African bishop is calculated to admonish Christian ministers in all ages to enlarge their views so as to comprehend the whole Church of Christ; and never to feel assured that they grow in true zeal and true charity, as long as they do not feel the evils of division, and do not labour to preserve peace and unity.

The progress of Christian grace will always be much seen in the just management of matters of this kind.

There is the strongest reason to believe that the authority of Cyprian had a great effect on the minds of Maximus and the other seduced confessors, whose undoubted piety gave the chief support to Novatian's party. But another circumstance happened about the same time, which contributed to open their eyes effectually. The excessive eagerness of the schismatics at Rome defeated their own end. With the view of increasing the Schism, they were so fraudulent as to send out frequent letters in the names of these confessors, almost throughout all the Churches. Maximus and the rest became acquainted with the fact, and were exceedingly surprised: they owned they knew not a syllable of the contents of these letters: and they heartily desired a reunion with the Church. The whole body of the Roman Christians,—and probably, at that time no purer Church existed,—sympathized with these confessors both in their seduction and in their recovery. Tears of joy and thanksgiving to God burst forth in the assembly. "We confess," says Maximus and the rest with ingenuous frankness, "our mistake.—We own Cornelius the bishop of the most holy general* Church, chosen by Almighty God and by Christ our Lord; we suffered an imposture: We were circumvented by treachery and a captious plausibility of speech: and though we seem to have had some communication with a schismatic and a heretic,† yet our mind was sincerely with the Church; for we knew that there is one God, one Christ, one Lord, whom we have confessed; one Holy Ghost; and that one bishop ought

to be in the general Church." "Should we not," says Cornelius, "be moved with their profession;—and, by restoring them to the Church, give them the opportunity of acting according to that belief which they have dared to profess before all the world? We have restored Maximus the presbyter to his office:—the rest we have also received with the zealous consent of the people."

Cyprian, with his usual animation,* congratulated Cornelius on the event; and describes the happy effect which the example of the confessors had on the minds of the people.—And, I cannot but think that, in modern times, much evil might have been prevented in the Church of Christ,—if many excellent men, who have suffered their minds to be harassed by needless and frivolous scruples, had possessed more tenderness of conscience in regard to the question of schism and separation.—"No one can now be deceived," says Cyprian, "by the loquacity of a frantic schismatic, since it appears that good and glorious soldiers of Christ could not long be detained out of the Church by perfidy and fallacy."

The Novatians being baffled at Rome, Novatus and Nicostratus went over to Africa. We have already taken notice of their seditious attempts in those parts. Cornelius,† by letter, warned Cyprian of the probable approach of the schismatics; and certainly, there is a disagreeable harshness of language in this account of his enemies as well as in the fragment of his Epistle preserved by Eusebius.

Of Novatus himself, the bishop of Carthage, who must have thoroughly known him, asserts expressly and circumstantially that he was guilty of horrible crimes, which, in truth, it is neither pleasant to particularize, nor does the plan of this history call for such a detail.—The honest charity of Cyprian requires that this testimony should be admitted.‡ This bishop was as remarkable for moderation as for zeal. He speaks with much sensibility of persons seduced by the arts of the foul impostor; and observes—"Those only will perish, who are wilful in their evils. The rest," says he, "the mercy of God the Father will unite with us, and the grace of our Lord Christ, and our patience." I wish this benevolent spirit had had opportunities of knowing Novatian as perfectly as he knew Nova-

* I choose to translate Cornelius's *Catholicus* in Epist. 46, which gives an account of this transaction, GENERAL rather than CATHOLIC, to distinguish the Church of Christ at large from particular separatists.

† They confound here two terms that ought to be kept distinct. Novatian was a schismatic, but not a heretic.

* Epist. 47.

† Epist. 43.

‡ Epist. 49.

tus. But a Roman, who does not appear ever to have come into Africa at all, could only be made known to him by report.—I shall find a convenient place by and by, in which it may be proper to make such further remarks upon him as the scanty and imperfect materials will supply.—Let the candid reader, however, always bear in mind, that, though Novatus was, doubtless, a very wicked man, though no ground for the separation appears in history, and though there is not the least reason to believe that the Spirit of God had left the general Church to abide with the dissentients, yet the personal character of several of the supporters of the schism might still be excellent.

In answer to a friendly letter of the Roman confessors,* Cyprian, after congratulating them on their re-union with the Church, and expressing his sincere sorrow for the former defection, delivers his sentiments on the duty of Christians in this point. The flattering idea, which had seduced these good men, was a notion of constituting a Church here on earth exactly pure and perfect.—The man, who sustained so much ill-will on account of discipline, may be heard with patience on this subject.—Yet he was far from supposing that fallible mortals should be able, in all cases, to decide positively who were true Christians and who not, and to rectify all abuses, and to cleanse the Church of all its tares. The middle state between impracticable efforts of severity and licentious neglect was Cyprian's judgment: He thought it necessary that the lapsed should show good marks of penitence: and he held it highly culpable to separate from the visible Church, for the want of that exact purity to the members which the present state of things does not admit. But let us hear the bishop himself. The subject is not, indeed, of the first importance, but it deserves, on account of its practical influence, to be deeply considered by all friends of vital godliness.

“Though there appear to be tares in the Church, our faith and love ought not to be impeded by seeing them, so that we should desert our post.—Our business is to labour, that we ourselves may stand a certainty, that when the wheat shall be gathered into the harvest, we may receive reward according to our labour. The Apostle speaks of vessels not only of gold

and silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour and some to dishonour.

“Be it our care that we be sound vessels of gold or silver: but we are not to break in pieces the vessels of earth: this belongs to the Lord alone, who has a rod of iron.—The servant cannot be greater than his master: nor must any man claim to himself what the Father attributes to the Son alone:—No man should think himself capable of thoroughly purging the floor, or of separating all the wheat from the tares by human judgment. To think so is proud obstinacy and sacrilegious presumption, which a depraved madness assumes to itself; and while some lay claim to a dominion of this kind beyond the limits of justice and equity, they are lost to the Church; and, while they insolently extol themselves, they become blinded by their passions, so as to lose the light of truth. With these views, we have aimed at a proper medium; we have contemplated the balance of the Lord; we have thirsted exceedingly that we might be directed both by the holiness and the mercy of God the Father; and, after a long and careful deliberation, we have settled a just mediocrity.—I refer you to my own books on the subject, which I lately read here; and which, from motives of brotherly love, I have sent over to you to read. In them there is wanting neither a due censure of the lapsed, nor medicine to heal the penitent.—I have expressed also my thoughts on the unity of the Church to the best of my feeble judgment.”†

There was a bishop of some note, named Antoninus, who seemed disposed to embrace the Novatian schism. To him Cyprian in a long letter explains with much force and clearness the whole of his ideas on the subject. A short abridgement of it may merit perusal, because of the charity and good sense which run through it.†

He clears himself from the charge of inconsistency, by showing, in both cases, the views on which he acted under very different circumstances, formerly with strictness, now with lenity;—he informs him what had been determined both at Rome and Carthage concerning the lapsed;—he enlarges on the virtues of Cornelius, who had ventured his life in a time of se-

* Epist. 30, 31.

† He means his Treatises on the Lapsed, and on the Unity of the Church.

† Epist. 32.

vere trial under Decius;—he defends him against the unjust aspersions of the Novatians, and demonstrates, that very different rules and methods should be used, according to the circumstances of offenders; and that Novatian's stoicism, by which all sins are equal, was absolutely repugnant to the genius of Christianity. He supports his ideas of mercy by striking and apposite passages of Scripture. For instance; "The whole need not a physician, but the sick." What sort of a physician is he, who says, "I cure only the sound?"—"Nor ought we to think all those whom we see wounded by a degree of apostasy, during the deadly persecution, to be absolutely dead; but rather to lie half dead only, and to be capable of being recovered by sound faith and penitence, so as yet to display in future the true characters of confessors and martyrs."

He shows that the censures of the Church ought not to anticipate the judgment of the Lord. His quotations of Scripture, in behalf of receiving penitents again into the Church may well be spared:—The Novatian uncharitableness will, in our days, scarcely find a defender.

He beautifully insists on the propriety and wholesomeness of mercy, gentleness, and charity, and exposes the unreasonableness of the present dissent from this circumstance—that formerly in Africa, some bishops excluded adulterers from a return into the Church,—but they did not form a schism on that account. And yet an adulterer appears to him to deserve a greater degree of severity than a man who lapses through fear of torment.—He exposes the absurdity of the Novatians in exhorting men to repent, while they rob them of all those comforts and hopes which should encourage repentance. It is observable, that he alleges nothing particular against the personal character of Novatian:—but he blames Schism with an excess of severity not to be defended.

From another circumstance we are led to remark the strictness of discipline which then prevailed in the purest Churches.—Several persons, who stood firm for a time in persecution, and afterwards fell through extremity of torment, were kept three years in a state of exclusion from the Church; and yet they lived all that

time with every mark of true repentance.—Cyprian being consulted,* decided that they ought to be re-admitted to communion.

The appearance of a new persecution from Gallus now threatening the Church, Cyprian, with the African synod, wrote to Cornelius on the subject of hastening the reception of penitents, that they might be armed for the approaching storm.†

In the mean time Felicissimus finding, after his condemnation, no security to his reputation in Africa, crossed the sea to Rome, raised a party against Cornelius, and by menaces, throw him into great fear. Cyprian's spirit seems more disturbed on this occasion than I have seen reason to observe in any of his epistles. He supports the dignity of the episcopal character in a style of great magnificence; but it is evident, that continued ill treatment from seditious characters had led him into some degree of impatience: The language he uses concerning the authority of bishops, would sound strange to our ears, though it by no means contains any definite ideas contrary to the Scriptures. The whole epistle is calculated to rouse the dejected spirit of Cornelius; and shows much of the hero—less of the Christian. He confesses—that he speaks grieved and irritated, by a series of unmerited ill usage. He takes notice that at the very time of writing this, he was again demanded by the people to be exposed to the lions. He speaks of the ordination of Fortunatus and also of Maximus, by the schismatics, in a contemptuous manner.—It is very evident, that, on the whole, he triumphed in Carthage among his own people. His great virtues and unquestionable sincerity secured him their affections; but they seem not to have been sufficiently patient and discreet in the re-admission of offenders: He complains that, in some cases, they were violent and resentful;—and in others, precipitately easy and favourable. The eloquence, and even the genuine charity of this great man, appears throughout this fifty-fifth epistle;—but it is deficient in the meekness and the moderation, which shine in his other performances.

* Epis. 53.

† Epis. 54.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EFFECTS OF THE PERSECUTION OF DECIUS IN THE EASTERN CHURCH.

THE Eastern and Western Churches were, in those times, divided from each other by the Greek and Roman language, though cemented by the common bond—of the Roman government, and much more—of the common Salvation. It will often be found convenient to consider their history distinctly. The gentile Church of Jerusalem still maintained its respectability under Alexander its bishop, who has been mentioned above. He was again called on to confess Christ before the tribunal of the president at Casarea; and, in this second trial of his faith, having acquitted himself with his usual fidelity, he was cast into prison: His venerable looks procured him neither pity nor respect: and he finally breathed out his soul under confinement.*

At Antioch, Babylon, after his confession dying in bonds, Fabius was chosen his successor. In this persecution the renowned Origen was called to suffer extremely. Bonds, torments, a dungeon, the pressure of an iron chair, the distension of his feet for many days, the threats of burning, and other evils were inflicted by his enemies, all which he manfully endured: and his life was still preserved; for the judge was solicitously careful that his tortures should not kill him. "What words he uttered on these occasions, and how useful to those who need consolation, many of his epistles," says Eusebius, "declare with no less truth than accuracy!"—If the words here alluded to were now extant, more light, I apprehend, might be thrown on the internal character of Origen, in respect to experimental godliness, than by all his works which remain. These show the scholar, the philosopher, and the critic:

Origen

died, aged
70.

—These would have displayed the Christian. This great

man died in his seventieth year, about the same time as the emperor Decius.

By and by I shall find occasion to insert an estimate of his character.

Dionysius was at this time bishop of Alexandria,—a person of great and deserved renown in the Church. We are

obliged to Eusebius for a few fragments of his writings, some of which being historical, must be here inserted. In an epistle to Germanus he writes thus:—"Sabinus, the Roman governor, sent an officer to seek me, during the persecution of Decius, and I remained four days at home, expecting his coming: he made the most accurate search in the roads, the rivers, and the fields, where he suspected I might be hid. A confusion seems to have seized him, that he could not find my house; for he had no idea that a man, in my circumstances, should stay at home. At length, after four days, God ordered me to remove;* and, having opened me a way contrary to all expectation, I and my servants and many of the brethren went together. The event showed that the whole was the work of Divine Providence.—About sun-set, I was seized, together with my whole company, by the soldiers, and was led to Taposiris. But my friend Timotheus, by the providence of God, was not present, nor was he seized. He came afterwards to my house, and found it forsaken and guarded; and he then learned that we were taken captive. How wonderful was the dispensation! but it shall be related precisely as it happened. A countryman met Timotheus as he was flying in confusion, and asked the cause of his hurry: he told him the truth: the peasant heard the story and went away to a nuptial feast, at which it was the custom to watch all night. He informed the guests of what he had heard. At once, they all rose up, as by a signal, and ran quickly to us, and shouted: our soldiers, struck with a panic, fled; and the invaders found us laid down on unfurnished beds. I first thought they must have been a company of robbers. They ordered me to rise and go out quickly; at length I understood their real designs; and I cried out, and entreated them earnestly to depart, and to let us alone. But if they really meant any kindness to us, I requested them to strike off my head, and so to deliver me from my persecutors. They compelled me to rise by downright violence; and I then threw myself on the ground. They seized my hands and feet, pulled me out by force; and placed me on an ass, and conducted me from the place."

Account of
Dionysius,
bishop of
Alexan-
dria.

* Euseb. B. 6. from C. 39 to the end.

* By a vision or some other Divine manifestation, I suppose.

In so remarkable a manner was this useful life preserved to the Church. We shall see it was not in vain.

In an epistle to Fabius bishop of Antioch, he gives the following account of the persecution at Alexandria, which had preceded the Decian persecution by a whole year, and which must have happened therefore under Philip, the most open friend of Christians. "A certain augur and poet took pains to stir up the malice of the gentiles against us, and to inflame them with zeal for the support of their own superstitions. Stimulated by him, they gave free course to their licentiousness, and deemed the murder of Christians to be the most perfect piety and the purest worship of demons. They first seized an old man, named Metras, and ordered him to blaspheme: he refused; and they beat him with clubs, and pricked his face and eyes with sharp reeds: they dragged him to the suburbs, and they there stoned him. Then they hurried one Quinta, a faithful woman, to the idol-temple, and insisted on her worshipping of the gods.—Quinta showed the strongest marks of abominating that practice. They then tied her by the feet; dragged her over the rough pavement through all the city; dashed her against mill stones, and whipped her; and lastly they led her back to the place where they had first seized her; and there they dispatched her.—After this, with one accord they all rushed on the houses of the godly: every one ran to the house of his neighbour, spoiled and plundered it; and purloined the most valuable goods, and threw away those things which were vile and refuse, and burnt them in the roads; and thus was exhibited the appearance of a captive and spoiled city. The brethren fled and withdrew themselves, and received with joy the spoiling of their goods, as those did to whom Paul beareth witness; and I do not know, that any person, who fell into their hands,—except one,—denied the Lord. Among others, they seized an aged virgin, called Apollonia, and dashed out all her teeth; and having kindled a fire before the city, they threatened to burn her alive, unless she would consent to blaspheme. This admirable woman begged for a little intermission; and she then quickly leaped into the fire, and was consumed. They laid violent hands on Serapion in his own house: they tortured him and broke all his limbs; and, lastly, threw him head

long from an upper room. No road, public or private, was passable to us, by night or by day: the people crying out always and every where, that unless we would speak blasphemy, we should be thrown into the flames;—and these evils continued a long time. A sedition then succeeded, and a civil war, which averted their fury from us, and turned it against one another; and again we breathed a little during the mitigation of their rage. Immediately the change of government was announced: The persecuting Decius succeeded Philip our protector, and we were threatened with destruction: The edict, which our Lord foretold would be so dreadful as to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect,* appeared against us.—All were astonished; many Christians of quality discovered themselves immediately through fear; others, who held public offices, were constrained by their office to appear; and others were brought forward and betrayed by their gentile relations. Each person was cited by name. They then approached the unholy altars; some pale and trembling, not as if they were going to sacrifice, but to be themselves the victims; so that they were derided by the multitude who stood around; and it was visible to all that they were very much frightened both at the prospect of death and at the crime of sacrificing: but some ran more readily to the altar, and affirmed boldly, that they never had been Christians. Of such our Lord affirmed most truly, that they should be saved with great difficulty.† Of the rest some followed the various examples above mentioned; and others fled:—Some persisted in the faith; and suffered bonds and imprisonment for many days; but, at last, before they were led to the tribunal, they abjured their religion;—others held out longer, and endured torments.—But the firm and stable pillars of the Lord, being strengthened by him, and having received vigour and courage proportionate and correspondent to the lively faith which was in them, became admirable martyrs of his kingdom.—The first of these was Julian, a gouty person who could neither stand nor walk; he was brought forth with two others who carried him; one of whom immediately denied Christ. The other, called Cro-

* It is evident that this application of our Lord's words is a mistake.

† I suppose he means because they were rich.

nion the Benevolent, and old Julian himself, having confessed the Lord, were led through the whole city,—very large as ye know it is,—sitting on camels; they were then scourged, and were at last burnt in a very hot fire in the view of surrounding multitudes. A soldier, named *Betas*, stood by them and defended them from insults; which so incensed the mob, that the man lost his head for having thus behaved boldly in the service of his God.—An African by birth, called *Mecar*,* and truly meriting the appellation, having resisted much importunity, was burnt alive. After these, *Epimachus* and *Alexander*, who had long sustained imprisonment and undergone a thousand tortures, were burnt to death; and along with these four women. *Ammoniarion*, a holy virgin, was grievously tormented by the judge for having declared beforehand that she would not repeat the blasphemy which he ordered: she continued faithful, and was led away to execution. The venerable ancient *Mercuria*—and *Dionysia*, a mother, indeed, of many children, but a mother who did not love her children more than the Lord—and another *Ammoniarion*,—these, together with many others, were slain by the sword without being first exposed to torments:—for the president was ashamed of torturing them to no purpose, and of being baffled by women;—which had been remarkably the case in his attempt to overcome the former *Ammoniarion*, who had undergone what might have been esteemed sufficient torture for them all.—*Heron*, *Ater*, and *Isidore*, Egyptians, and with them a boy of fifteen, called *Dioscorus*, were brought before the tribunal: the boy resisted both the blushments and the tortures which were applied to him: the rest, after cruel torments, were burnt. The boy having answered in the wisest manner to all questions, and excited the admiration of the judge, was dismissed by him from motives of compassion, with an intimation of hope that he might afterwards repent.—And now the excellent *Dioscorus* is with us, reserved to a greater and longer conflict. *Nemesian* was first accused as a partner of robbers; but he cleared himself of this charge before the Centurion:—An information,—that he was a Christian, was then brought against him, and he came bound before the president, who most unjustly scourged him

with twice the severity used in the case of malefactors, and then burnt him among robbers.—Thus was he honoured in resembling Christ in suffering.

* And now some of the military guard, *Ammon*, *Zeno*, *Ptolemy*, and *Ingenius*, and with them old *Theophilus*, stood before the tribunal; when a certain person being interrogated whether he was a Christian, and appearing disposed to deny the imputation, they made such lively signs of aversion as to strike the beholders; but before they could be seized, they ran voluntarily to the tribunal and owned themselves Christians,—so that the governor and his assessors were astonished.—God triumphed gloriously in these; and gave them evidently the ascendant over the judges; and they went to execution with all the marks of exultation.

* Many others through the towns and villages were torn to pieces by the gentiles. *Iscyrion* was an agent to a certain magistrate; yet he refused to sacrifice: This man, after repeated indignities, was killed by a large stake driven through his intestines.—But why need I mention the multitude of those who wandered in deserts and mountains, and were at last destroyed by famine, and thirst, and cold, and diseases, and robbers, and wild beasts? Those, who survived, are witnesses of their faithfulness and victory. Suffice it to relate one fact: There was a very aged person named *Charemon*, bishop of the city of *Nilus*. He, together with his wife, fled into an Arabian mountain; and they did not return; nor could the brethren, after much searching, discover them alive or dead; and many persons about the same Arabian mountain were led captive by the Barbarian *Sarcena*, some of whom were afterwards redeemed for money with difficulty; others could never regain their liberty." *Dionysius* adds something concerning the benevolence of the martyrs towards the lapsed, and contrasts it with the inexorable severity of *Novatian*.

Two things are evident from this narrative, 1st, That the persecution found the Eastern Christians as poorly provided against the storm as the Western. Long peace and prosperity had corrupted both; and men, in the former part of this century, had forgotten that a Christian life was that of a stranger and pilgrim. The Decian persecution, under God, was at once a scourge and an antidote. 2d, Yet there still existed a competent number of

* Happy or blessed.

those who should prove the truth of Christianity, and the power of Divine Grace accompanying it.—The true Church is not destroyed, but flourishes and triumphs amidst both inward and outward evils.

Eusebius relates a story, from Dionysius's letters to Fabius, which he says was full of wonder:—"There was a faith-

The story of Serapion. ful aged person, named Serapion, who had lived blameless a long time, but fell, in the time of trial, through fear of death or of bodily pain. He had frequently solicited to be restored to the Church, but in vain,—because he had sacrificed. He was seized with a distemper and continued speechless and senseless for three days successively; but recovering a little on the fourth, he called to his grandson, 'And how long,' says he, 'do you detain me? I beseech you hasten and quickly dismiss me.' Desire one of the presbyters to visit me; and after this he was again speechless. The boy ran for the presbyter; it was night; the presbyter was sick, and could not come. But he had given directions to receive dying penitents,—particularly if they should have supplicated for it,—that they might leave the world in good hope. He gave a little of the Eucharist to the boy; and bid him dip it in water, and put it into the old man's mouth; The child hastened to follow the directions; and found Serapion a little recruited,—who said, 'You are come, son;—do quickly what you are ordered, and dismiss me.' The old man had no sooner received the morsel, than he gave up the ghost. Was he not evidently reserved, until he was absolved; and was not his sin remitted, and the man acknowledged by Christ as a faithful servant on account of many good works." Thus far Dionysius.

I remark here, 1st, That the connexion between the sacrament and the grace conveyed by it, being usually thus expressed as if it were necessary and indissoluble, both in baptism and the Lord's Supper, gave occasion to the increase of much superstition in the Church. I am disposed to believe, and certainly to hope, that both Dionysius and Serapion knew that the sign was nothing without the inward grace. Yet perhaps they are not to be acquitted of superstition on account of the inordinate stress which they laid on external things.—The reader must observe that this evil continues to grow during the third century.

2d.—That, along with this superstition, the power of the leaders of the Church would naturally increase beyond the due bounds. That it did so afterwards surprisingly is well known;—but I judge the evil to have begun already both in the East and in the West.

3d.—That there was at that time, among persons of real piety, a general propensity to extend discipline too far. Serapion ought, doubtless, to have been sooner received into the Church. The Lord seems to have favoured him with a token of his loving-kindness, by fulfilling his desires of being readmitted into the Church before he left the world.—But how much more decent and proper would it have been for him to have been received while in health. Satan always pushes men to extremes. Church discipline was held then too high; with us it is reduced to the lowest state. Without communion with a visible Church establishment in form, however impracticable it might be, it was scarcely thought possible for a man to be saved. Many persons, at that time, would have had no hope of Serapion's salvation, if the power of his disease had prevented the reception of the Eucharist. The clouds of miserable superstition increased, till by the light of the Reformation they were dispelled. On the contrary, in our age, the Lord's Supper itself is treated with levity by thousands who call themselves Christians; and communion with a settled ministry and Church is esteemed as a thing of trifling consequence by numbers who profess the doctrines of vital godliness.

Dionysius wrote several other tracts, which are mentioned by Eusebius:—Among the rest he wrote to Cornelius, bishop of Rome, in answer to his letter against Novatian;* and informed him—that he had been invited by Helens of Tarsus in Cilicia, and by the rest of the bishops of his neighbourhood, by Eutimilian of Cappadocia and Theoctistus of Palestine, to meet them in a synod at Antioch, where some attempts were made to strengthen the Novatian party.—But all these Churches united to condemn the schism, and, with this view, Dionysius wrote to the Roman confessors both before and after they had returned to the Church. On the whole, the East and

* Eusebius certainly calls him Novatus by mistake.

West united in condemning the new dissenters; whose head having professed that some brethren had compelled him to the separation, Dionysius wrote to Novatian himself to this effect: "If you were led unwillingly, as you say, you will prove it by returning willingly; for a man ought to suffer any thing rather than to read the Church of God. Even martyrdom on this account would be no less glorious than on any other;—even more so.—For in common martyrdom a man is a witness for one soul;—here for the whole Church. And now, if you would compel or persuade the brethren to unanimity, your good conduct would be more laudable than your defection was culpable. The latter will be forgotten, the former will be celebrated through the Christian world. But if you find it impracticable to draw over others, save your own soul at least; I wish you to be strong in the Lord, and studious of peace." Such was the zeal of the Christian leaders at that time for the preservation of unity. If there had been a defection from Christian purity of doctrine in the general Church, or if the Heads of it, for the most part, had been vicious men in principle or practice, one might have suspected that the Lord had forsaken these, and that his Spirit had rested chiefly with the new separatists. But that godliness in a considerable degree prevailed still in the Church at large is very evident. Cyprian, Dionysius, Cornelius, Firmilian, were holy men; Martyrs, in abundance from their flocks, suffered for Christ's sake. A number of Church officers suffered in a very edifying manner:—The lapsed were restored among them by the most Christian methods of mildness and just discipline;—and this with success in a variety of cases.—Dionysius concurred with Cyprian in his views on the subject; and, though the flame of Christian piety was considerably lowered since the days of Ignatius, I see not a shadow of proof that there was any just reason for dissent or any superior degree of spirituality with the Novatians.—If, for example, there had been many persons among them of half the purity of Cyprian, I think it probable that history would not have been silent respecting them.

It is my duty to trace the work of the Divine Spirit wherever I can find it. Traces of this Spirit, with the Novatians in general, in those times, I cannot discern; and yet, it is improbable, that they

should have been a people altogether forsaken of God. Wherever the real truth, as it is in Jesus, is professed, there some measure of his Spirit must probably exist. Novatian himself is constantly reprehended both by Cyprian and by Dionysius: Yet, I observe, they cast no imputations on his moral character: His schism alone is the object of their reprehension: Cornelius, indeed, carries the matter still farther, as we have seen; but I am not disposed to credit all he says: His temper was heated by personal competition.

Before we proceed to other instances of the Decian persecution, it may be proper to conclude the affair of Novatian: Let us collect what evidence we can; and endeavour to form a just estimate of his character:—If our observations appear unsatisfactory;—let it be imputed to the scantiness of the materials.

Novatian was originally a Stoic; and seems to have contracted all the severity which marked that sect of philosophers. He was born a Phrygian, and came to Rome, where he embraced Christianity. He applied for the office of presbyter; but, as he had neglected certain ecclesiastical forms after recovery from a sickness, he was objected to by the clergy and the people. The bishop,—probably Fabian the predecessor of Cornelius,—desired that the rules might be dispensed with in his case. This was granted; and it is a testimony, surely, rather in favour of his abilities and conduct than otherwise, particularly, as the circumstance stands recorded by the pen of his rival Cornelius.* That he excelled in genius, learning, and eloquence, is certain: and hence, it is not probable, that he was a man of debauched or of loose morals. The evils of his schism were unquestionably great; but no vice seems affixed to his character; nor does any just suspicion lie against the purity of his intentions. One of the letters of the Roman clergy to Cyprian, written by Novatian himself, is still extant: It is worthy of a Roman presbyter and of a zealous Christian;—and, at that time, the writer coincided in opinion with the African prelate. Eusebius, in his *Chronicon*, ranks him among the confessors; and it is certain, that while he continued presbyter his fame was not only without a blot, but very fair in the Church.

Character
of Nova-
tian.

* See his letter in Eusebius. † Pam. 31.

Perhaps it had been happy for him if he had never consented to become a bishop. The preference given to Cornelius in the election of a bishop, was, probably enough, the grand cause of the schism: From being actuated by a temperate degree of severity, he became intolerably inexorable in his ideas of discipline: It is not for man to say how far temper, stoicism, prejudice, and principle might all unite in this business:—We must now behold him bishop of the Novatians, and industriously spreading the schism through the Christian world. The repeated condemnation of it in synods hindered not its growth; and as purity of principle and inflexible severity of discipline, were their favourite objects, it is not to be apprehended that Novatian could have supported himself in the opinion of his followers without some degree of exemplary conduct. He is allowed to have preserved in soundness the Christian FAITH: There is actually extant a treatise by him on the Trinity;—and that, one of the most regular and most accurate which is to be found among the ancients. It is astonishing that any man should ascribe the ideas of the Trinitarians mainly to the Nicene Fathers. We have repeatedly seen proofs of the doctrine being held distinctly in all its parts from the Apostles' days. This treatise by Novatian may be added to the list:—I know not how to abridge it better than by referring the reader to the Athanasian creed. The Trinity in Unity, and the Godhead and Manhood of Christ in one person, are not more plainly to be found in that creed, than in the composition of this contemporary of Cyprian.

I wish that a more experimental view, —a more practical use—of Christian doctrines, were to be seen in it. But all professors of Christianity,—Churchmen or dissenters—seem, at that time, to have much relaxed in this respect. The favour and simplicity of the life of faith in Jesus was not so well known: yet,—particularly under the article of the Holy Ghost, —he speaks very distinctly of “him as the author of regeneration, the pledge of the promised inheritance, and, as it were, the hand-writing of eternal salvation,—who makes us the temple of God and his house,—who intercedes for us with ‘groanings which cannot be uttered,’—who acts as our advocate and defender,—who dwells in our bodies, and sanctifies them for immortality. He it is, who

fights against the flesh,—hence the flesh fights against the Spirit:”—and he proceeds to speak in the best manner of his holy and blessed operations in the minds of the faithful.*

He wrote also a sensible little tract against the bondage of Jewish meats; in which he explains the nature of Christian liberty, according to the views of St. Paul, with just directions for the maintenance of temperance and decorum.

The letter to Cyprian before mentioned closes his works. He lived to the time of Valerian, under whom Cyprian suffered. In that persecution also fell Novatian by martyrdom, as appears from the authentic testimony of Socrates.† His rival Cornelius died a little time before them, in exile for the faith.—It will be a grateful refreshment to the reader to pause for a moment; and to contemplate these three men meeting in a better world, clothed with the garments of Jesus, and in him knowing their mutual relation, which prejudice hindered in this mortal scene of strife, infirmity, and imperfection. Neither the separation of Novatian, nor the severity with which the two regular bishops condemned him, can be justified.—There seems, however, sufficient evidence of the Christian character of the separatist;—The general tenor of his life;—and above all, his death, show to whom he belonged.‡

The reader will pardon this digression;—if that be indeed a digression,—which shows that the Spirit of God was not limited to one denomination of Christians; and which paves the way for a liberal and candid construction of characters. In the future scenes of this history, while we trace the kingdom of God through a multiplicity of names and divisions of men, it will highly behove us to cultivate an unprejudiced temper.

To proceed with the Decian persecution.—The management of this seems to have been the whole employment of the magistrates. Swords, wild beasts, pits, red-hot chairs, wheels for stretching human bodies, and talons of iron to tear them;—these were at this time the instruments of Pagan vengeance. Malice and covetousness in informing against Christians were eagerly and powerfully set on work during this whole short, but horrible reign: And the genius of men was

* Nov. Trin. p. 114.

† L. IV. C. 28.

‡ Greg. Nyss. vita Thaum. p. 1000.—See Fleury, B. 6—25.

never known to have had more of employment in adding the savageness of the heart. Life was prolonged in torture, in order that impatience in suffering might effect at length, what surprise and terror could not.

Mark two examples of Satanic artifice. A martyr having endured the rack and burning plates, the judge ordered him to be rubbed all over with honey, and then to be exposed in the sun, which was very hot, lying on his back with his hands tied behind him, that he might be stung by insects.—Another person, young and in the flower of his age, was, by the order of the same judge, carried into a pleasant garden among flowers, near a pleasing rivulet surrounded with trees: here they laid him on a feather bed, bound him with sicken cords, and left him alone. Afterward, a very handsome lewd woman was introduced to him; who began to embrace him and to court him with all imaginable impudence. The martyr spit in her face; and at length bit off his own tongue; as the most effectual method in his power of resisting the assaults of sensuality. In the most shocking and disgusting trials, Christianity, however, appeared what it is,—true holiness; while its persecutors showed that they were at enmity with every virtuous principle of internal benevolence, and of external decorum.*

Alexander, bishop of Comana, suffered martyrdom by fire. At Smyrna, Eudemon the bishop apostatized, and several unhappily followed his example. But the glory of this Church, once so celebrated by the voice of infallibility,† was not totally lost. The example of Pionius, one of the presbyters, was salutary to all the churches.—The account of his martyrdom is, in substance, confirmed by Eusebius:—Not, in general, is there any thing in it improbable, or unworthy of the Christian spirit.‡—In expectation of being seized, he put a chain about his own neck, and caused Sabina and Asclepiades to do the same,—to show their readiness to suffer. Polemon, keeper of the idol-temple, came to them with the magistrates: “Don’t you know,” says he, “that the emperor has ordered you to sacrifice?” “We are not ignorant of the

commandments,” says Pionius, “but they are those commandments which direct us to worship God.” “Come to the market-place,” says Polemon, “and see the truth of what I have said.” “We obey the true God,” said Sabina and Asclepiades.

When the martyrs were in the midst of the multitude in the market-place, “It would be wiser in you,” says Polemon, “to submit and avoid the torture.” Pionius began to speak; “Citizens of Smyrna, who please yourselves with the beauty of your walls and city, and value yourselves on account of your poet Homer; and ye Jews, if there be any among you, hear me speak a few words: We find that Smyrna has been esteemed the finest city in the world, and was reckoned the chief of those which contended for the honour of Homer’s birth. I am informed that you deride those who come of their own accord to sacrifice, or who do not refuse when urged to it. But surely your admired Homer should teach you never to rejoice at the death of any man.”* “And ye Jews ought to obey Moses, who tells you, ‘Thou shalt not see thy brother’s ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.’† And Solomon says, ‘Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth.’—For my part I would rather die, or undergo any sufferings, than contradict my conscience in religious concerns.‡ Whence then proceed those bursts of laughter and cruel scoffs of the Jews, pointed not only against those who have sacrificed, but against us? They insult us with a malicious pleasure to see our long peace interrupted.—Though we were their enemies still we are men.—But what harm have we done them? What have we made them to suffer? Whom have we spoken against? Whom have we persecuted with unjust and unrelenting hatred? Whom have we compelled to worship idols? Have they no compassion for the unfortunate? Are they themselves less culpable than the poor wretches, who, through the fear of men or of tortures, have been induced to renounce their religion?” He then addressed the Jews on the grounds of their own

* Odys. xiii. v. 412.

† Deut. xiii. 4.

‡ Pionius adapts himself to his audience, and converts them of guilt even by their own principles, a thing not hard to be done in all cases,—except in those of true Christians, who never fail to show their faith by their works.

* Jerom. vita Paul. † Rev. ii. 8, 9. ke.

† Fosc. B. & C. 15.—Fleury, B. 6.—30.

Scriptures, and solemnly placed before the Pagans the day of judgment.

The sermon bore some resemblance to Stephen's* in like circumstances; It tended to heget conviction of sin, and to lead men to feel their need of the Divine Saviour, according to the justest views and in the soundest taste of the Gospel. He spake long, and was very attentively heard; and there is reason to hope that his exertions were not in vain. The people who surrounded him said with Polemon, "Believe us, Pionius, your probity and wisdom make us deem you worthy to live;—and life is pleasant."—Thus powerfully did conscience and humanity operate in their hearts. "I own," says the martyr, "life is pleasant, but I mean that eternal life which I aspire after: I do not with a contemptuous spirit reject the good things of this life; but I prefer something which is infinitely better:—I thank you for your expressions of kindness: I cannot, however, but suspect some stratagem in it."

The people continued intreating him: and he still discoursed to them of a future state.—The well-known sincerity and unquestionable virtues of the man seem to have filled the Smyrneans with veneration, and his enemies began to fear an uproar in his favour. "It is impossible to persuade you then," said Polemon. "I would to God I could," said Pionius, "persuade you to be a Christian!"

Sabina, by the advice of Pionius, who was her brother, had changed her name, for fear of falling into the hands of her pagan mistress, who, in order to compel her to renounce Christianity, had formerly put her in irons, and banished her to the mountains, where the brethren secretly supported her with nourishment. She now called herself Theodota. "What God dost thou adore?" says Polemon. "God Almighty," she answered, "who made all things;—of which we are assured by his Word Jesus Christ." "And what dost thou adore?" speaking to Asclepiades. "Jesus Christ," says he. "What, is there another God?" says Polemon. "No," says he, "this is the same whom we come here to confess."—He, who worships the Trinity in Unity, will find no difficulty in reconciling these two confessions. Let him, who does not so worship, attempt it. One person pitying Pionius, said, "Why do you that

are so learned seek death in this resolute manner!"

When carried to prison, they found there a presbyter named Lemnus,—a woman named Macedonia,—and another called Eutychiana, a Montanist.

These all employed themselves in praising God, and showed every mark of patience and cheerfulness. Many Pagans visited Pionius, and attempted to persuade him to renounce his religion:—His answers struck them with admiration. Some persons, who, by compulsion, had sacrificed, visited them and shed many tears. "I now suffer afresh," says Pionius; "and methinks I am torn in pieces when I see the pearls of the Church trod under foot by swine, and the stars of heaven cast to the earth by the tail of the dragon.*—But our sins have been the cause."

The Jews, whose character of bigotry had not been lessened by all their miseries, and whose hatred to Christ continued from age to age with astonishing uniformity, invited some of the lapsed Christians to their synagogue. The generous spirit of Pionius was moved to express itself vehemently against the Jews. Among other things he said, "They pretend that Jesus Christ died like other men by constraint. Was that man a common felon, whose disciples have cast out devils for so many years? Could that man be forced to die, for whose sake his disciples, and so many others, have voluntarily suffered the severest punishment?"

—Having spoken a long time to them, he requested them to depart out of the prison.

Though the miraculous dispensations tendant on Christianity form no part of the plan of this History, I cannot but observe on this occasion, how strongly their continuance in the third century is here attested. Pionius affirms that devils were ejected by Christians in the name of Christ; and he does this in the face of enemies, who would have been glad of the shadow of an argument to justify their bitterness, resentment, and perfidy.

The captain of the horse came to the prison, and ordered Pionius to go to the idol-temple. "Your bishop Eudemon hath already sacrificed," said he. The martyr, knowing that nothing of this sort could be done legally till the arrival of the proconsul, refused. The captain put a cord about his neck, and dragged him along with Sabina and others. They cried,

* Acts of the Apostles, Chap. vii.

* Rev. xii. 4.

"We are Christians," and fell to the ground, that they might not enter the idol-temple. Pionius, after much resistance, was forced into it and placed on the ground before the altar; and there stood the unhappy Eudemon, after having sacrificed.

Lepidus, a judge, asked; "What God do you adore?" "Him," says Pionius, "that made heaven and earth." "You mean him that was crucified?" "I mean him whom God the Father sent for the salvation of men." The judges then whispered to one another, and said,— "We must compel them to say what we wish."—Pionius heard them, and cried, "Blush, ye adorers of false gods: have some respect to justice, and obey your own laws: they enjoin you not to do violence to us; but merely to put us to death."

Then Rufinus said, "Forbear, Pionius, this thirst after vain-glory." "Is this your eloquence?" answered the martyr: "Is this what you have read in your books? Was not Socrates thus treated by the Athenians? According to your judgment and advice he sought after vain-glory, because he applied himself to wisdom and virtue."—Rufinus was struck dumb.—The case was apposite in a degree: Socrates, undoubtedly, suffered persecution on account of his zeal for moral virtue.

A certain person placed a crown on Pionius's head, which he tore in pieces before the altar: The Pagans finding their persuasions ineffectual, remanded them to prison.

A few days after this, the proconsul Quinctilian returned to Smyrna, and examined Pionius. He, then, tried both tortures and persuasions in vain; and at length, enraged at his obstinacy, he sentenced him to be burnt alive.

The martyr went cheerfully to the place of execution, and thanked God, who had preserved his body pure from idolatry. After he was stretched and nailed to the wood, the executioner said to him, "Change your mind, and the nails shall be taken out." "I have felt them," answered Pionius: He then remained thoughtful for a time; afterward he said, "I hasten, O Lord, that I may the sooner be a partaker of the resurrection." Metrodorus, a Marcionite, was nailed to a plank of wood in a similar manner: They were then both placed upright; and a great

quantity of fuel was heaped around them. —Pionius, with his eyes shut, remained motionless, absorbed in prayer while the fire was consuming him. At length he opened his eyes, and looking cheerfully on the fire, said, "Amen;"—his last words were, "Lord, receive my soul."—(Of the particular manner in which his companions suffered death we have no account.

In this narrative we see the spirit of heavenly love triumphing over all worldly and selfish considerations. Does not the zeal of Pionius deserve to be commemorated as long as the world endures? The man appears to have forgotten his sufferings: He is wholly taken up in vindicating the divine truth to the last.—Who can doubt of his having been a faithful preacher of the Gospel? He is intent on the blessed work amidst his bitterest pains.—Glorious exemplification of true religion in its simplicity!

If there be any thing particular in the treatment he underwent, it consists in the repeated endeavours which were made to preserve his life.—The man was much respected, though the Christian was abhorred. Integrity and uprightness, when eminent, and supported by wisdom and learning, fail not to overawe, to captivate, and to soften mankind. The voice of natural conscience pleads; but cannot overcome the enmity of the human heart against God.

There are many good reasons which may be assigned why sound learning ought to be cultivated by Christians, and especially by all who mean to be pastors of Christ's flock. The case of Pionius clearly intimates this. Knowledge never fails to ensure respect. It does this a thousand times more effectually with mankind than birth or wealth, or rank, or power.—It is evident that Pionius was a man of learning, and that his persecutors esteemed him on that account, and took pains to detach him from Christianity.—We may conceive how useful this accomplishment had been in the course of his ministry.

A Montanist and a Marcionite are the fellow-sufferers of this martyr: The latter is consumed with him in the flames. Doubtless, from all the information of antiquity, both these heresies appear in an odious light. But there might be exceptions, and who so likely to be among those exceptions, as those who suffered? We must not confuse the truth of godliness to any particular denomina-

tion. Providence, by mixing persons of very opposite parties in the same scene of persecution, demonstrates that the pure faith and love of Jesus may operate in those who cannot own each other as brethren: I know not whether Pionius and Metrodorus did so on earth: I trust they do so in heaven.

In Asia a merchant named Maximus, was brought before Optimus the proconsul, who inquired after his condition? "I was born free," said he, "but I am the servant of Jesus Christ." "Of what profession are you?" "I live by commerce." "Are you a Christian?" "Though a sinner, yet I am a Christian." While the usual process of persuasions and of tortures was going forward;—he exclaimed,—"These are not torments which we suffer for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: They are wholesome exhortations."—Such was the effect of the Holy Ghost shedding the love of God in Christ abroad in the human heart!—He was ordered to be stoned to death.*

All this time the persecution raged in Egypt with unremitting fury. In the lower Thebias there was a young man named Paul, to whom, at fifteen years of age, his parents left a great estate. He was a person of much learning, of a mild temper, and full of the love of God. He had a married sister, with whom he lived. Her husband was base enough to design an information against him, in order to obtain his estate. Paul, having notice of this, retired to the desert mountains, where he waited till the persecution ceased.

Paul the first Hermit.

Habit, at length, made solitude agreeable to him. He found a pleasant retreat, and lived there during fourscore and ten years. At the time of his retirement he was twenty-three, and he died at the age of a hundred and thirteen.† This is the first distinct account of a hermit in the Christian Church.—No doubt ought to be made of the genuine piety of Paul.—Those, who, in our days, condemn ALL Monks with indiscriminating contempt, seem to make no allowance for the prodigious change of times and circumstances. Reflect seriously on the sort of society to which Christians were exposed in the reign of Decius: Was there a day,—an hour, in which they could enjoy its comforts, or secure its

benefits? Where could Christian eyes or ears direct their attention,—and not meet with objects exceedingly disgusting? If Paul preferred solitude in such a season, we need not be more surprised than we are at the conduct of Elijah the prophet.—But, why did he not, with the return of peace, return also to the discharge of social duties?—The habit was contracted; and the love of extremes is the infirmity of human nature.—Besides, a heart breathing the purest love to God might naturally enough be led to think the perfection of godliness best attainable in solitude.—The increasing spirit of superstition soon produced a number of imitations of Paul: and the most lamentable effect was that these, who possessed only external religion, placed their righteousness and their confidence in monastic austerities;—and thus, from the depraved imitations of well-meant beginnings, one of the strongest supports of false religion gradually strengthened itself in the Christian world.

Here we close the account of the Decian persecution. Its author is admired by Pagan writers. What has been said of Trajan and Antoninus is applicable to him. He was a moralist; and he was a cruel persecutor.—It cannot be denied, that for thirty months the Prince of Darkness had full opportunity to gratify his malice and his fury. But the Lord meant to chasten and to purify his Church,—not to destroy it. The whole scene is memorable on several accounts.—It was not a local or intermitting, but a universal and constant persecution: and, therefore, it must have transmitted great numbers to the regions where sin and pain shall be no more.—The peace of thirty years had corrupted the whole Christian atmosphere: The lightning of the Decian rage refined and cleared it. No doubt, the effects were salutary to the Church. External Christianity might indeed have still spread, if no such scourge had been used; but the internal spirit of the Gospel, would, probably, have been extinguished. The survivors had an opportunity of learning, in the faithfulness of the martyrs what that spirit is; and men were again taught, that he alone, who strengthens Christians in their sufferings, can effectually convert the heart to true Christianity.—The storm, however, proved fatal to many individuals who apostatized; and Christianity was, in that way, cleared of many false friends. We have

* Fleury, B. 6—40.

† Ibid. B. 6—48.

also noticed two collateral evils.—Both the formation of schisms and of superstitious solitudes had their date from the Decian persecution.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF GALLUS.

THE successor of Decius allowed the Church of Christ a little tranquillity. During that space the two small treatises of Cyprian concerning the Lapsed and concerning Unity, were, doubtless, of some service in recovering the lapsed to a state of penitence, and in disposing the minds of men

Gallus
encompassed
Decius
about
A. D. 251.

to preserve the unity of the Church. In the former of these treatises, indeed, it must be confessed he carries his censure of the Novatians too far. The aim and the danger of rending the body of Christ might have been stated in the strongest terms, without pronouncing the evil to be absolutely damnable: This was carrying the matter beyond all bounds of moderation. But the same candour which should incline one to apprehend that Novatian was influenced by good intentions, in his too rigid scheme, pleads also for the motives of Cyprian's zeal in the maintenance of unity.—He seems to have considered the mischief as most exceedingly destructive; and he can find no terms sufficiently strong to express his detestation of it.

But Gallus soon began to disturb the peace of the Christians, though not with the incessant fury of his predecessor.—

A Roman presbyter, named Hyppallitus, had been seduced into Novatianism; but his mind had not been perverted from the faith and love of Jesus. He was now called on to suffer martyrdom, which he did with courage and fidelity. Either curiosity or a desire of instructive information induced some persons to ask him in the last scenes of his sufferings, whether he still persisted in the communion of Novatian! He declared in the most explicit terms, that he now saw the affair in a new light,—that he repented of having encouraged the schism,—and that he died in the communion of the general Church.—Such a tes-

timony must have weakened the influence of the schism.*

In this persecution of Gallus it was that Cornelius confessed the faith of Christ, and was banished, by the emperor, to Civita Vecchia; which gave occasion to a congratulatory letter from Cyprian. In one part of it he reflects on the Novatians with his usual vehemence:—
The rest breathes a fervent spirit of piety and charity, and throws a strong light on two historical facts;—namely,—that the persecution of Gallus was severe;—and, that the Roman Christians bore it with becoming and exemplary fortitude.

Banish-
ment of
Cornelius.

* We have been made acquainted, dearest brother, with the glorious testimonies of your faith and virtue; and we have received the honour of your confession with such exultation, that, in the praises of your excellent conduct, we reckon ourselves partners and companions. For, as we have but one Church, united hearts, and indivisible concord, what pastor rejoices not in the honours of his fellow-pastors as his own! Or what brotherhood does not every where exult in the joy of brothers? We cannot express how great was our joy and gladness when we heard of your prosperous fortitude;—that at Rome you were the leader of the confession, and, moreover, that the confession of the leader strengthened, in the brethren, their disposition to confess;—that while you led the way to glory, you incited many to be companions of your glory; so that we are at a loss which most to celebrate,—your active and steady faith, or the inseparable love of the brethren. The virtue of the bishop in leading the way was publicly admired; while the union of the brethren in following him was proved beyond contradiction: There was but one mind and one voice among you all. The Apostle foresaw, in spirit, this faith and firmness of the whole Roman Church, which have shown so illustriously; and, in praising the primitive fathers, he stirs up their future sons to an imitation of their courage and patience. Your unanimity and perseverance are great, and an instructive example to the brethren. Ye have taught largely the important lesson of fearing God, of firmly adhering to Christ, of uniting pastors with the people, brethren with brethren in one common danger; ye have proved,—

that a concord thus formed is invincible;—that the God of peace hears and answers the joint prayers of the peace-makers.—With terrible violence the adversary rushed to attack the soldiers of Christ; but was bravely repulsed.

“He had hoped to supplant the servants of God, by finding them, like raw soldiers, unprepared: He had hoped to circumvent a few individuals; but he found them united for resistance; and he learnt,—that the soldiers of Jesus remain on the watch sober and armed for the battle; that they cannot be conquered;—that they may die; but that they are invincible because they fear not death;—that they resist not aggressors, since it is not lawful for them, though innocent, to kill the guilty;* and lastly,—that they readily give up their life and shed their blood, in order that they may the more quickly depart from an evil world in which wickedness and cruelty rage with so much fierceness. What a glorious spectacle under the immediate eyes of God! What a joy in the sight of Christ and of his Church, that—not a single soldier, but the whole army together, endured the warfare! Every individual, who heard of this proceeding, has joined in it: How many lapsed are restored by this glorious confession! For now they have stood firm; and, by the very grief of their penitence, are made more magnanimous: Their former fall may now be justly considered as the effect of sudden tremor; but they have returned to their true character: they have collected real faith and strength from the fear of God, and have panted for martyrdom.

“As much as possible we earnestly exhort our people not to cease to be prepared for the approaching contest, by watching, fasting, and prayers. These are our celestial arms: these are our fortresses and weapons. Let us remember one another in our supplications: Let us be unanimous and united; and let us relieve our pressures and distresses by mutual charity: And whosoever of us shall first be called hence, let our mutual love in Christ continue; and let us never cease to pray to our merciful Father for all our brethren and our sisters.”

Thus ardent was the spirit of Cyprian in the expectation of martyrdom! And

so little account did he make of temporal things! And, in this natural and easy manner, did he esteem the dreadful scenes of persecution as matter of joy.

He himself was preserved, for the use of the Church, beyond the life of Gallus, as well as of Decius.—Cornelius died in exile: His faithfulness in suffering for Christ evinces all along whose servant he was;—otherwise, history affords little evidence respecting his character.—The little specimen which we have of his writings, will induce no one to think highly of his genius or capacity.

It is no wonder that Cyprian, who had seen and known such dreadful devastations under Decius, finding, after a very short interval, the persecution renewed by Gallus, should be tempted to imagine the approach of Antichrist,—the end of the world,—and the day of judgment to be at hand. Sagacious and holy men are never more apt to be deceived than when they attempt to look into futurity. God hath made the present so much the exclusive object of our duty, that he will scarcely suffer even his best and wisest servants to gain reputation for skill and foresight by any conjectures concerning the times and the seasons, which he hath reserved in his own power. The persecution of Gallus proved, however, a light one compared with that of Decius. Under very formidable apprehensions of it, Cyprian wrote an animating letter to the people of Thibaris.* The mistaken idea I have mentioned, probably, added spirit to the epistle; nevertheless the reasoning is solid; and his arguments, and the scriptures which he quotes, deserve attention in all ages.—A few extracts may gratify the reader.

“I had intended, most dear brethren, and wished,—if circumstances had permitted, agreeably to the desire you have frequently expressed,—myself to have come among you; and, to the best of my poor endeavours, to have strengthened the brotherhood with exhortations. But urgent affairs detain me at Carthage; I cannot make excursions into a country so distant as yours; nor be long absent from my people. Let these letters, then, speak for me.

“You ought to be well assured, that the day of affliction is at hand; and, that the end of the world, and time of Antichrist, is near: We should all stand pre-

* A plain proof of the passiveness of Christians, still continued from the Apostolic age, under the most unjust treatment.

pared for the battle, and think only of the glory of eternal life and of the crown of Christian confession. Nor ought we to flatter ourselves that the imminent persecution will resemble the last:—a heavier and more ferocious conflict hangs over us, for which the soldiers of Christ ought to prepare themselves with sound faith and vigorous fortitude; and consider that they daily drink the cup of the blood of Christ,* for this reason,—that they themselves may be able to shed their blood for him.—To follow what Christ hath taught and done is to be willing to be found with Christ. As John the the Apostle says: ‘He that saith he abideth in Christ, ought himself also to walk even as he walked.’ Thus also the blessed Apostle Paul exhorts and teaches, saying, ‘We are the sons of God, and if sons, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together.’ Let no man desire any thing now which belongs to a perishing world; but let him follow Christ, who lives for ever, and who makes his servants to live, if indeed they be settled in the faith of his name. For the time is come, most dear brethren, which our Lord long ago foretold, saying, ‘The hour is coming, when whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service.’” In his usual manner he quotes those Scriptures which relate to persecution: and, doubtless, the force and beauty of them would then be felt and admired, more than they are by us, who, it is to be feared, are apt to speculate upon them at our ease with too much indifference.

Observe how justly he arms their minds against the discouragement which the circumstances of approaching persecution are apt to induce. “Let no one, when he sees our people scattered through fear of persecution, be disturbed, because he sees not the brethren collected, nor the bishops employed among them. We, whose principles allow us to suffer death, but not to inflict it, cannot possibly, in such a season, be all in one place.—Wherever, therefore, in those days, by the necessity of the time, any one shall be separated, in body, not in spirit, from the rest of the flock,—let not such a one be moved at the horror of the flight, nor be terrified by the solitude of the desert,

while he retreats and lies hid. No man is alone, who hath Christ for his companion: No man is without God, who, in his own soul, preserves the temple of God undefiled. The Christian may indeed be assailed by robbers or by wild beasts among the mountains and deserts; he may be afflicted by famine, by cold, and by thirst, he may lose his life in a tempest at sea,—but the SAVIOUR himself watches his faithful soldier fighting in all these various ways; and is ready to bestow the reward which he has promised to give in the resurrection.”

He then produces precedents of Scripture-saints, who suffered for God in the most ancient times, and adds, “How shameful must it be for a Christian to be unwilling to suffer, when the Master suffered first; to be unwilling to suffer for our own sins, when he, who had no personal sin, suffered for us.* The Son of God suffered, that he might make us the sons of God:—and, shall not the sons of men be willing to suffer, that they may continue to be esteemed the children of God?”

“Antichrist is come, but Christ is also at hand.—The enemy rages and is fierce, but the Lord is our defender: and he will avenge our sufferings and our wounds.”—He again makes apposite Scripture quotations.—That from the Apocalypse is remarkable, “If any man worship the beast and his image,” &c. Rev. xiv. 9.

“O what a glorious day,” continues Cyprian, “will come, when the Lord shall begin to recount his people, and to adjudge their rewards;—to send the guilty into hell;—to condemn our persecutors to the perpetual fire of penal flame;—and to bestow on us the reward of faith and of devotedness to him. What glory! what joy! to be admitted to see God;—to be honoured; to partake of the joy of eternal light and salvation with Christ the Lord your God; to salute Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Patriarchs, and Prophets, Apostles, and Martyrs; to joy with the righteous, the friends of God, in the pleasures of immortality!—When that revelation shall come, when the beauty of God shall shine upon us, we shall be as happy as the deserters and

* The daily reception of the Lord's Supper appears to have been the practice of the African Church at that time.

* I have translated this literally. The difference between suffering for our own sins, and suffering for us, is striking; the first is corrective, the second is by imputation. Cyprian believed the atonement of Christ, and therefore varied his phraseology, to prevent mistakes.

rebellious will be miserable in inextinguishable fire."

Such are the views of the next life which this good bishop sets before Christians. The palm of heavenly-mindedness belonged to these persecuted saints; and I wish, with all our theological improvements, we may attain to a measure of this zeal amidst the various good things of this life, which as Christians, we at present enjoy.

Lucius was chosen bishop of Rome in the place of Cornelius; but was immediately driven into exile by the authority of Gallus. Cyprian congratulated him both on his promotion and on his sufferings.

His exile must have been of short duration. He was permitted to return to Rome in the year two hundred and fifty-two; and a second congratulatory letter was written to him by Cyprian.* He suffered death soon after; and was succeeded by Stephen.—The episcopal seat at Rome was then, it should seem, the next door to martyrdom.

It was not owing to any diminution of his usual zeal and activity, that the African prelate was still preserved alive, while three of his contemporaries at Rome, Fabian, Cornelius, and Lucian, died a violent death or in exile. About this time he dared to write an epistle to a noted persecutor of those times, named Demetrianus: and, with great freedom and dignity, he exposed the unreasonableness of the Pagans in charging the miseries of the times upon the Christians. There will be no necessity to give any detail of his reasonings on the subject:—Paganism has at this day no defenders.—The latter part of the epistle, which is exhortatory and doctrinal, shall be afterwards considered, when we come to make an estimate of Cyprian's theological works.

The short reign of Gallus was distinguished by so large an assemblage of human miseries, as to give a plausible colour to Cyprian's mistake of the near approach of the end of the world. A dreadful pestilence broke out in Africa, which daily carried off numberless persons; and frequently swept away whole houses. The Pagans were alarmed beyond measure: Through fear, they

neglected the burial of the dead, and violated the duties of humanity. The bodies of many lay in the streets of Carthage, and in vain seemed to ask the pity of passers-by.*—It was on this occasion,—that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Christians to show the practical superiority of their religion; and, that Cyprian, in particular, exhibited one of the most brilliant proofs of his real character. He gathered together his people, and expatiated on the subject of mercy. He pointed out to them,—that if they did no more than others,—no more than the heathen and the publican did in showing mercy to their own, there would be nothing so very admirable in their conduct;—that Christians ought to overcome evil with good, and, like their heavenly Father, to love their enemies, since he makes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. Why does not he, who professes himself a son of God, imitate the example of his Father? We ought to answer to our birth, and those, who appear to be born again of God should not degenerate, but should be solicitous to evidence the genuineness of their relation to God by the imitation of his goodness. Much more than this, Pontius tells us, was said by him. But Pontius is always very scanty in his informations.

The eloquent voice of Cyprian, on this occasion, as on others, roused the alacrity of his people. The Christians ranked themselves into classes for the purpose of relieving the public distress. The rich contributed largely: The poor gave what they could; namely, their labour, with extreme hazard of their lives:—The Pagans saw with astonishment the effects of the love of God in Christ; and had a salutary opportunity of contrasting these effects with their own selfishness and inhumanity.

The dreadful calamity of the Plague gave to Cyprian an opportunity of impressing on the minds of his people, what, in truth, had been the ruling object of his own life since his conversion, namely—a warm and active regard for the blessings of immortality, joined with a holy indifference for things below. He published on this occasion his short treatise on Mortality. He, who wrote it, must have felt what all have need to feel,—how little a thing life is,—how valuable the prospect of heavenly bliss! The

* Epist. 58.

* Vit. Pont.

whole of this little tract is very precious; but the reader must be content with a few extracts.

"The kingdom of God, my dearest brethren, shows itself to be just at hand. The reward of life, the joy of eternal salvation, perpetual gladness, and paradise lost,—all these things come into our possession now that the world passes away: Heavenly and eternal glories succeed earthly, fading trifles. What room is there for anxiety, solicitude, or sadness, unless faith and hope are wanting? If, indeed, a man be unwilling to go to Christ, or does not BELIEVE that he is going to reign with him, such a one has good reason to fear death: For, 'the just live by faith.'—Are ye then just; Do ye live by faith; Do ye really believe in the promise of God?—If so,—why do ye not feel secure of the faithfulness of Christ; why do ye not embrace his call, and bless yourselves that ye shall soon be with him, and be no more exposed to Satan?"

He then makes an apposite use of the case of good old Simeon, and adds,

"Our stable peace, our sound tranquillity, our perpetual security is in the world to come:—In this world we wage a daily war with our spiritual enemies; we have no rest: If one sin be subdued, another is up in arms:—We are continually exposed to temptations; but the divine laws forbid us to yield to them.—Surely, amidst such constant pressures, we ought to be joyful in the prospect of hastening to Christ by a speedy departure. How does our Lord himself instruct us on this very head? Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.—Who does not wish to be free from sorrow? Who would not run to take possession of joy? Since then to see Christ is joy, and since our joy cannot be full till we do see him,—what blindness, what infatuation is it, to love the penal pressures and tears of the world, and not to be desirous of quickly partaking of that joy which shall never pass away!"

"The cause of this, dear brethren, is UNBELIEF: We none of us believe really and solidly those things to be true which the God of truth promises,—whose word is eternally firm to those that put their trust in him. If a man of a grave and respectable character promises you any thing, you do not doubt his performance,

because you know him to be faithful. Now God himself speaks with you; and dare you waver in uncertainty? He promises you immortality when ye shall depart out of this world; and will ye still doubt?—This is not to know God: This is to offend, with the sin of unbelief, Christ the Lord and Master of believers:—'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,' said the blessed Apostle,—who computed it to be gain indeed,—no longer to be detained in the snares of the world,—no longer to be obnoxious to sin and the flesh,—to be exempt from excruciating pressures,—to be freed from the poisonous jaws of Satan,—and lastly, to go to the joys of eternal salvation upon the call of Christ."

Some of Cyprian's people happened to be staggered in their minds, because they found that Christians were liable to be afflicted with the plague as others: Upon which, the bishop explained to them—that inasmuch the children of God are indeed separated from the rest of mankind; but that, in all other respects, they are obnoxious to the common evils of human life. In his usual manner he supports his precepts by Scripture examples; and speaks eloquently and solidly of the benefits of afflictions, and of the opportunity of showing what spirit they are of. "Let that man fear to die," says he, "who has the second death to undergo; who is not born of water and the Spirit; who is not a partaker of the cross and passion of Christ; and whom eternal flame will torment with perpetual punishment. To such a one life is indeed a desirable object, because it delays his condemnation:—but what have good men to dread from death?—They are called by it to an eternal refreshment.—There is, however, great use in a season of uncommon mortality: It rouses the idle; compels deserters to return; and produces faith in the Gentiles: It dismisses and sends to rest many old and faithful servants of God; and it raises fresh and numerous armies for future battles."

"We should consider and think again and again, that we have renounced the world and live here as strangers. What stranger loves not to return to his own country? Let us rejoice in the day which summons us to our home.—There, a great number of dear friends await us: What raptures of mutual joy to see and embrace one another!"

The active as well as the passive graces

of Cyprian were kept in perpetual exercise by various calamities, which happened at no great distance of time from each other. The madness of men has ever been generating the horrors and miseries of war, and there have never been wanting poets and historians to celebrate the praises of those who have most excelled others in shedding human blood.—It belongs to narrations purely Christian to record, with a modest, yet firm approbation, the actions of holy men, whom the world despises, but whom the grace of God leads to the exercise of real love to God and men.—Mark another instance of Cyprian's truly Christian benevolence. Numidia, the country adjoining to Carthage, had been blessed with the light of the Gospel, and a number of Churches were planted in it. By an irruption of the barbarous nations, who neither owned the Roman sway, nor had the least acquaintance with Christianity, many Numidian converts were carried into captivity. Eight bishops, Januarius, Maximus, Proculus, Victor, Modianus, Nemesian, Nampulus, and Honoratus, wrote the mournful account to the prelate at Carthage. What he felt and did on the occasion his own answer will best explain. The love of Christ and the influence of his Holy Spirit will appear to have been not small in the African Church from this and from the foregoing case; nor will the calamities of the times and the scourge of persecution seem to have been sent to them in vain.*

“With much heart-felt sorrow and tears we read your letters, dearest brethren, which ye wrote to us in the solicitude of your love concerning the captivity of our brethren and sisters. For who would not grieve in such cases? or who would not reckon the grief of his brother his own? since the Apostle Paul says, ‘If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; and if one member rejoice, all the other members rejoice with it;’ and elsewhere, ‘Who is weak, and I am not weak?’ Therefore now the captivity of our brethren is to be reckoned our captivity; and the grief of those who are in danger is to be reckoned as our own grief, since we are all one body:—Not only our affections, but the religion of Jesus itself ought to incite us to redeem the brethren: For, since the Apostle says, in another place, ‘Know ye not that ye

are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?’ It follows, that even if our love did not induce us to help the brethren, yet, in such circumstances, we ought to consider, that they which are taken captive, are the temples of God, and that we ought not, by a long delay and neglect, to suffer the temples of God to remain in captivity, but to labour with all our might, and quickly to show our obsequiousness to Christ our Judge, our Lord, and our God. For whereas Paul the Apostle says, ‘As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have been baptized into his death;’ Christ is to be viewed as existing in our captive brethren; and he, who dwells and abides in us, must, by a sum of money, be redeemed from captivity, and snatched from the hands of the barbarians;—he, who by his cross and blood,* redeemed us from death, and snatched us from the jaws of Satan.—In fact, he suffers these things to happen, in order that our faith may be tried, and that it may be seen whether we be willing to do for another what every one would wish to be done for himself, were he a prisoner among the barbarians. For who, if he be a father, does not now feel as if his sons were in a state of captivity? Who,—if a husband,—is not affected as if his own wife were in that calamitous situation? This must be the case, if we have but the common sympathy of men.—Then how great ought our mutual sorrow and vexation to be on account of the danger of the virgins who are there held in bondage! Not only their slavery, but the loss of their chastity is to be deplored; the bonds of barbarians are not so much to be dreaded as the lewdness of men, lest the members of Christ dedicated to him, and devoted† for ever to the honour of continency, should be defiled and insulted by libidinous savages.

“Our brethren, ever ready to work the work of God, but now much more quickened by great sorrow and anxiety to forward so salutary a concern, have freely and

* Redemption by the blood of Jesus, union and fellowship with him maintained in the soul by faith, and the returns of love answerable to his loving kindness, these are the principles of Christian benevolence.

† Voluntary celibacy, I apprehend, was in growing repute in the Church at that time. St. Paul's advice in the 7th of first Cor. had then many followers, but monastic vows had yet no existence.

largely contributed to the relief of the distressed captives. For, whereas the Lord says in the Gospel, 'I was sick, and ye visited me;' with how much stronger approbation would he say, 'I was a captive, and ye redeemed me?' And when again he says, 'I was in prison, and ye came to me;' how much more is it in the same spirit to say,—I was in the prison of captivity and lay shut up and bound among barbarians, and ye freed me from the dungeon of slavery: Ye shall receive your reward of the Lord in the day of judgment.

"Truly we thank you very much that ye wished us to be partakers of your solitudes, and of a work so good and necessary;—that ye have offered us fertile fields in which we might deposite the seeds of our hope with an expectation of an exuberant harvest. We have sent a hundred thousand sesterces,—the collection of our clergy and laity* of the Church of Carthage, which you will dispense forthwith according to your diligence. Heartily do we wish that no such thing may happen again, and that the Lord may protect our brethren from such calamities. But if, to try our faith and love, such afflictions should again befall you, hesitate not to acquaint us; and be assured of the hearty concurrence of our Church with you both in prayer and in cheerful contributions.

"That you may remember in your prayers, our brethren, who have cheerfully contributed,—I have subjoined the names of each;—I have added also the names of our colleagues in the ministry, who were present and contributed, in their own names and in that of the people; and, besides my own proper quantity, I have set down and sent their respective sums. We wish you, brethren, always prosperity."

About this time, Cyprian wrote to an African bishop, named Cæcilius, for the purpose of correcting a practice in the administration of the Lord's Supper, which had crept into some Churches,—of using water instead of wine.—With arguments drawn from the Scriptures, he insists on the necessity of wine in the ordinance, as a proper emblem of the blood of Christ.

The appointment of Stephen to the bishopric of Rome was soon followed by the

death of Gallus; who was slain, in the year two hundred and fifty-three, after a wretched reign of eighteen months.

Death of
Gallus,
A. D. 253.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PACIFIC PART OF VALERIAN'S REIGN.

UNDER Gallus the peace of the Church of Christ seems to have been very short and precarious. But his successor Valerian, for upwards of three years, proved their friend and protector. His house was full of Christians, and he appears to have had a strong predilection in their favour.

The Lord exercises his people in various ways. There are virtues adapted to a state of prosperity as well as of adversity.—The wisdom and love of God, in directing the late terrible persecutions, have been plainly made manifest by the excellent fruits.—Let us now attend to the transactions of Christians during this interval of refreshment.

The affairs of Cyprian detain us long, because his eloquent pen continues to attract us; and because we would not lose a faithful and an able guide, till we are compelled to leave him.—Probably, there were many before his time, whose Christian actions would have equally deserved to be commemorated: But the materials of information fail us: The fine compositions of this bishop are still, however, a capital source of historical instruction.

During the tranquillity under the emperor Valerian, a council was held in Africa by sixty-six bishops, with Cyprian at their head. The object of this assembly was, doubtless, the regulation of various matters relating to the Church of Christ.—These bishops had, unquestionably, each of them, a small diocese; and with the assistance of their clergy, they superintended their respective jurisdiction according to the primitive mode of Church-government. The face of Africa, which is now covered with Mahometan, idolatrous, and piratical wickedness, afforded in those days a very pleasing spectacle; for we have good reason to believe that a real and salutary regard was paid to the various flocks by their ecclesiastical shepherds. But, we have no particular accounts of the proceedings of this council beyond what is contained in

* About 741*l.* 5*s.* sterling.—See Notes to Epist. 62. Oxford Edit.

a letter of Cyprian, to which I shall presently advert. He mentions two points, which engaged their attention;—but, it is very likely, that matters of greater importance than either of those points were then reviewed:—The synod was worthy of the name of Christian: many of the bishops then present had faithfully maintained the cause of Christ during scenes of trial the most severe that can be imagined; and I know no ground for suspecting the clergy of those times to have been influenced by schemes of political ambition for increasing their wealth or power.

A presbyter, named Victor, had been re-admitted into the Church without having undergone the legitimate time of trial in a state of penance, and also without the concurrence and consent of the people. His bishop, Therapius, had done this arbitrarily and contrary to the institutes of the former council for settling such matters. Cyprian, in the name of the council, contents himself with reprimanding Therapius; but yet confirms what he had done, and warns him to take care of offending in future.

This is one of the points. And, we see hence that a strict and godly discipline, on the whole, now prevailed in the Church; and that the wisest and most successful methods of recovering the lapsed were used. The authority of bishops was firm, but not despotic: and the share of the people, in matters of ecclesiastical correction and regulation, appears worthy of notice.

The other point he thus explains in the same letter addressed to Fidus: “As to the care of infants, of whom you said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the ancient law of circumcision should be so far adhered to that they ought not to be baptized till the eighth day; we were all of a very different opinion. We all judged that the mercy and grace of God should be denied to none. For, if the Lord says in his Gospel, ‘the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them,’ how ought we to do our utmost, as far as in us lies, that no soul be lost! Spiritual circumcision should not be impeded by carnal circumcision. If, even to the foulest offenders when they afterwards believe, remission of sins is granted, and none is prohibited from baptism and grace; how much more should an infant be admitted;—who, just

born, hath not sinned in any respect, except, that being carnally produced according to Adam, he hath, in his first birth, contracted the contagion of the ancient deadly nature;—and who obtains the remission of sins with the less difficulty, because not his own actual guilt, but that of another, is to be remitted.

“Our sentence therefore, dearest brother, in the council was, that none, by us, should be prohibited from baptism and the grace of God, who is merciful and kind to all.”

I purpose carefully to avoid disputes on subjects of small moment. Yet to omit a word here on a point, which hath produced volumes of strife, might seem almost a studied affectation: On such occasions I shall briefly and peacefully state my own views, as they appear deducible from evidence.

Instead of disputing whether the right of infant-baptism is to be derived from Scripture alone, and whether tradition deserves any attention at all, I would simply observe,—that the Scripture itself seems to speak for an infant baptism;*—and further, that tradition, in matters of custom and discipline, is of real

Defence of
Infant baptism.

weight, as appears from the confession of every one; for every one is glad to support his cause by it, if he can:—and in the present case,—to those who say that the custom of baptizing children was not derived from the apostolical ages, the traditional argument may fairly run in language nearly Scriptural, “if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God:”†—and we never had any such custom as that of confining baptism to adults.

Here is an assembly of sixty-six pastors, men of approved fidelity and gravity, who have stood the fiery trial of some of the severest persecutions ever known, and who have testified their love to the Lord Jesus Christ, in a more striking manner than any Antipædo-baptists have had an opportunity of doing in our days; and, if we may judge of their religious views by those of Cyprian,—and they are all in perfect harmony with him,—they are not wanting in any fundamental of godliness. No man in any age more revered the Scriptures, and made more copious use of them on all occasions,

* 1 Cor. vii. 14.

† 1 Cor. xi. 16.

than he did; and,—it must be confessed,—in the very best manner. For he uses them continually, for PRACTICE, not for ORNAMENTATION; for USE, not for the sake of VICTORY in argument.—Before this holy assembly a question is brought,—not whether infants should be baptized at all,—more contradicted this,—but, whether it is right to baptize them immediately, or on the eighth day! Without a single negative, they all determined to baptize them immediately. This transaction passed in the year two hundred

A. D. 253. and fifty-three. Let the reader consider: If infant-baptism had been an innovation, it must have been now of a considerable standing: The disputes concerning Easter, and other very uninteresting points, show that such an innovation must have formed a remarkable era in the Church. The number of heresies and divisions had been very great. Among them all such a deviation from apostolical practice as this, must have been remarked. To me it appears impossible to account for this state of things, but on the footing that it had ever been allowed; and, therefore, that the custom was that of the first Churches. Though, then, I should wave the argument drawn from that sentence of St. Paul, "Else were your children unclean, but now they are holy;"—and yet it is not easy to explain its meaning by any thing else than infant-baptism,—I am under a necessity of concluding, that the antagonists of infant-baptism are mistaken. Yet I see not why they may not serve God in sincerity, as well as those who are differently minded. The greatest evil lies in the want of charity: and in that contentious eagerness, with which singularity, in little things, is apt to be attended. Truly good men have not always been free from this:—perhaps few persons, on the whole, cultivated larger and more generous views than our African prelate:—yet, in one instance, we shall presently see, he was seduced into a bigotry of spirit not unlike to that which I here disapprove, and greatly lament.

I could have wished that Christian people had never been vexed with a controversy so frivolous as this about baptism: but having, once for all, given my views and the reasons of them, I turn from the subject, and observe farther,—that there is, in the extract of the letter before us, a strong and clear testimony of the faith of the ancient Church concern-

ing the doctrine of original sin. One may safely be allowed to reason, on that head, in the same way as in the case just now considered; but the fulness of Scripture concerning so momentous a point precludes the necessity of traditional arguments. A lover of divine truth will, however, not be displeased to find,—that, without contradiction, Christians in the middle of the third century did believe, that men were born in sin and under the wrath of God through Adam's transgression, and, by their connexion with him as a federal head, were involved in all the consequences of his offence. Such were the sentiments of the ancient Christians in general;—of the very best Christians,—who possessed the spirit of Christ in the most powerful degree.—The just consequences, which belong to this fact, are seldom attended to by persons who are wise in their own conceit.—"Let us attend," say they, "to right reason,—to modern improvements in the interpretation of Scripture, and let us reject without ceremony the obsolete absurdities of ancient ignorance;"—The real practical meaning of which is this: We will torture and twist, in every possible direction, the most perspicuous passages of holy writ, rather than we will acknowledge them to contain doctrines which we dislike.—To submit at once to the testimony of the Divine Word is, in itself, the most reasonable thing in the world; but when men will not abide by that;—when they will substitute schemes of their own fancy and invention,—in the place of actual revelation,—and still profess themselves to be under the guidance of the Scriptures, it may then be very expedient to oppose and confute their unwarrantable constructions and criticisms by the unanimous judgment of the primitive Church, who had the best opportunity of knowing the truth.—There is no unprejudiced mind, which will not feel the force of this argument.

The following private case,—which must have happened in a time of peace, —and therefore may properly be referred to this period, deserves, on account of the light which it throws on primitive Christian manners, to be distinctly recorded.

"Cyprian to Eueratius his brother.

Health. Your love and esteem have induced you, dearest brother, to consult me as to what I think of the case of a Plover among you, who still continues to instruct others in that infamous and mi-

scorable art, which he himself hath learnt. You ask whether he should be allowed the continuance of Christian communion? I think it very inconsistent with the majesty of God, and the rules of his Gospel, that the modesty and honour of the Church should be defiled by so base and infamous a contagion. In the law* men are prohibited to wear female attire, and are pronounced abominable; how much more criminal must it be, not only to put on woman's garments, but also to express lascivious, obscene, and effeminate gestures in a way of instructing others!—By these means boys will not be improved in any thing that is good, but absolutely ruined in their morals.

“And let no man excuse himself, as having left the theatre, while yet he undertakes to qualify others for the work. You cannot say that the man has ceased from his business, when he provides substitutes in his own place, and furnishes the playhouse with a number of performers instead of one; and teaches them, contrary to the divine ordinances, to confound, in their apparel, the proper and decent distinctions of the sexes; and so gratifies Satan by the defilement of the divine workmanship.—If the man makes poverty his excuse, his necessities may be relieved in the same manner as those of others, who are maintained by the alms of the Church, provided he be content with frugal and simple food, and do not fancy that we are to hire him, by a salary, to cease from sin; since it is not our interest, but **HIS OWN**, that is concerned in this affair. But,—let his gains by the service of the playhouse be ever so large,—What sort of gain is that, which tears men from a participation in the banquet of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and leads them from their miserable and ruinous feasting in this world to the punishments of eternal famine and thirst? Therefore,—if possible,—recover him from this depravity and infamy to the way of innocence and to the hope of life, that he may be content with a parsimonious, but salutary maintenance from the Church. And, if your Church be insufficient to maintain its own poor,† he may transfer himself to us;—and he shall here receive what is necessary for food and raiment:—He must, however, no longer teach his

pernicious lessons; but himself endeavour to learn something from the Church that may be useful to his salvation. Dearest son, I wish you constant prosperity.”*

The decision of Cyprian is, doubtless, that which piety and good sense would unite to dictate in the case.—A player was ever an infamous character at Rome; and was looked on as incapable of filling any of the offices of state. The Romans, at the same time that they showed, in this point, the soundness of their political, evinced the depravity of their moral, sense: For there were still maintained by them, at the public expense and for the public amusement, a company of men, who,—they knew,—must of necessity be dissolute and dangerous members of society. If this was the judgment of sober Pagans, we need not wonder that the purity of Christianity would not even suffer such characters to be admitted into the bosom of the Church at all. To say, that there are noble sentiments to be found in some dramas, answers not the purpose of those, who would vindicate the entertainments of the stage. The support of them requires a system in its own nature corrupt;—a system, which must gratify the voluptuous and the libidinous, or it can have no durable existence. Hence, in every age, complaints have been made of the licentiousness of the stage; and the necessity of keeping it under proper restraints and regulations has been admitted by its greatest admirers. But it is, I think, a great mistake to suppose that the stage may remain a favourite amusement, and, at the same time, be so regulated as not to offend the modest eyes and ears of a humble Christian. The gravest advocates for the theatre expect pleasure from it rather than instruction: If, therefore, you believe that human nature is corrupt and impure, only ask yourself what sort of dramatic exhibitions and conversations will be most likely to meet with the applause of the people;—and you will soon be led to conclude, that the playhouse is and must be a school of impurity.

The first Christians felt the force of this obvious argument, and they rejected the stage entirely.—A Christian, renouncing the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and yet frequenting the playhouse, was with them a solecism.—The effusion of the Holy Spirit, which, during three

* Deut. xxii. 5.

† Eucherius was the bishop of the place called Thence, lying in the military road to Carthage.

centuries, we are now reviewing, never admitted these amusements at all.—The profession of the dramatic art, and the profession of Christianity, were held to be absolutely inconsistent with each other.

It is one of the main designs of this History to show, practically, what true Christians were, both in principles and in manners: and, in this view, the case before us is exceedingly instructive.—What would Cyprian have said had he seen large assemblies of Christians, so called, devoted to these impurities, and supporting them with all their might, and deriving from them the highest delight?—“Such persons must, certainly, be strangers to the joy of the Holy Ghost; and I cannot but wonder why they choose to retain the name of Christians.”—Then, if he had examined their stage entertainments, and compared them with those that were in vogue in his own day,—Would he not have seen the same confusion of sexes,—the same encouragement of unchaste desires, and the same sensuality, with the same contemptuous ridicule of Christianity?—If, indeed, in his time the Gospel was ever burlesqued on a stage, as it has frequently been in ours.—In some points of lesser consequence, the ancient drama might differ from the modern; but, on the whole, the spirit and tendency was the same; and, doubtless, this excellent bishop would have been astonished to be told, that in a country which called itself Christian, actors and actresses and managers of playhouses amassed large sums of money;—that many exemplary clergymen could scarcely find subsistence; and, that theologians of great erudition enlisted in the service of the stage, and obtained applause by writing comments on dramatic poets.

There was a bishop of Assure, named Festus, who had lapsed in the time of persecution, and who, without any marks of repentance, still assumed to himself the episcopal character, and insisted on his being received as such by the clergy and people. This case produced an epistle of Cyprian to the Church,* in which he as strenuously opposes the ambitious claims of the bishop as, in similar circumstances, he had formerly done those of the laity; and he repeats the advice which he had before given to the lapsed, and cautions the people against the reception of him in his former rank and station.

—Behold now the strenuous assertor of the right of faithful bishops openly exposing the pretensions of unworthy ones, and instructing the people to guard themselves against such delusions! What effect his epistle had, does not appear: The weight of his character, and the vigour of the discipline then happily prevalent in Africa, make it probable that it had the desired success.

Rogatian, an African bishop, complained to Cyprian and his colleagues assembled in a Synod, of the insolent and injurious behaviour of a deacon. Cyprian observes, that he might have done himself justice without taking this step.—He applies the case of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram to this of the haughty deacon, and takes notice very properly of the humble and unassuming carriage of our Lord toward the impious dignitaries of the Jewish Church. “He taught us,” says he, “by his own behaviour towards false pastors, how true ones ought to be fully and regularly honoured.”

The following passage is, perhaps, the most striking proof of any in Cyprian's writings, that the ideas of episcopacy were too lofty, even in that age, and that they had insensibly grown with the gradual increase of superstition.—Let it be remarked as a character of the spirit of those times; and as an instance of the effect of that spirit on a mind the most pure and humble.

“Deacons ought to remember that the Lord chose Apostles, that is, bishops and rulers; but that the Apostles, after his ascent into heaven, chose to themselves deacons, as the ministers of their government and of the Church. Now if we dare do any thing against God who makes bishops, then may deacons dare to act against us by whom they are appointed.”

Even the least offensive part of this comparison is very unseemly: Bishops are, by no means, to be considered in the same light as Apostles.—His next observation is, however, strictly just: “These are the beginnings of heresies, and the attempts of ill-disposed schismatics to please themselves, and to despise with haughtiness their superiors.” He proceeds to advise the bishop how to act concerning a turbulent deacon; and he does this with that happy mixture of firmness and charity, of which, by a peculiarly intuitive discernment, he seldom failed to show himself a master.*

* Epia. 6.

* Epia. 66.

Geminus Victor, by his will, appointed Faustinus, a presbyter, a guardian. In an African synod, Cyprian and his colleagues wrote to the Church of Furne* a protest against the practice.—The clergy were then looked on as men wholly devoted to divine things; secular cares were taken out of their hands as much as possible.—Let this fact, also, be noted as one of the happy effects of the work of the Holy Ghost on the Church.

Novatianism had spread into Gaul; and Marcian, bishop of the Church of Arelate, united himself to the schism. Faustinus, bishop of Lyons, and several other French bishops, wrote to Stephen of Rome on this subject. Faustinus wrote, also, concerning the same matter, to Cyprian of Carthage; who, in a letter to Stephen, supported the cause of the general Church against the schismatics.—These facts are mentioned, for the purpose of showing how the Gospel, which had so gloriously begun at Lyons in the second century, must now have spread in France to a great degree.—Contentions and schisms usually have no place, till after Christianity has taken deep root.

The same observation may be made respecting the progress of Christianity in Spain; where, by the inscriptions of Cyriac of Ancona, it appears that the light of truth had entered in Nero's time. Two Spanish bishops, Basilides and Martial, had deservedly lost their pastoral offices in the Church, on account of their unfaithfulness in the persecution. Cyprian and his colleagues in council wrote to confirm their deposition: He shows that the people, no less than the clergy, were bound to abstain from communion with such characters; and he supports his argument by the directions of Moses to the children of Israel, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men. He recommends†—that ordinations should be performed in the sight of all the people, that they might all have an opportunity to approve or to condemn the characters of the persons ordained. He takes notice—that, in Africa, the neighbouring bishops used to meet in the place where the new bishop was to be ordained; and, that there he was chosen in the presence of the people themselves, who knew fully the life and conversation of every candidate. He observes—that Sabinus, who had been substituted in the room of

Basilides, had been ordained in this fair and equitable manner: and he censures Basilides for going to Rome, and for gaining by deceit, the consent of Stephen to his being re-instated in his former dignity. Cyprian thinks—that his guilt was much aggravated by his conduct; and in regard to Martial, who, it seems, had defiled himself with Pagan abominations, he insists,—that his deposition ought to remain confirmed.

While these things show the unhappy spirit of human depravity bearing down the most wholesome fences of discipline, they evince, that there existed persons at that time in the Christian world, who exerted themselves,—and that not without success,—to preserve the purity of the Church. And, if ever it should please God to affect, with due care and zeal, the hearts of those, who possess the power to reform our own ecclesiastical defects and abuses, better guides and precedents than these,—next to the Scriptures,—will scarcely be found.

In the year two hundred and fifty-four, Pupian, a Christian of distinction in Carthage, by letter accused Cyprian of ruling the Church with imperious sway; and of ejecting members from it with great insolence and haughtiness. The African prelate had presided now during six years, and had signalized himself, equally in persecution and in peace, as the friend of piety, order, and discipline, and had exerted himself, in the use of every temporal and spiritual faculty, solely for the good of the falling and distempered Church: he saw, by this time, the great success of his labours; and, it now behooved him to pay the tax, which eminent virtue ever does pay to slander and to envy.—A tax, no doubt, exceedingly irksome and distressing;—nevertheless, necessary to prevent the risings of pride, and to preserve the most eminent Christian humble before his God. Pupian believed, or affected to believe very unjust rumours, which were circulated against his pastor; and said, that the scruple of conscience, with which he was seized, prevented him from owning the authority of Cyprian. He himself had suffered during the persecution, and had been faithful; but, like Lucian, whom he probably resembled both in virtues and weaknesses, he was disgusted at the backwardness of Cyprian in receiving the lapsed. This malcontent heavily com-

Pupian's letter, accusing Cyprian, A. D. 254.

* Epia. 67.

† Epia. 68.

plained of his severity, while the Novatian party had separated from their bishop on account of his lenity. The best and wisest characters have ever been most exposed to such inconsistent charges. It does not appear that Pupian was able to raise a second sect of dissenters on opposite grounds to those of the first: and we may hope that he reflected on his error, and returned into a state of reconciliation with his bishop. A few extracts from Cyprian's answer—for we have not Pupian's letter—may throw still stronger light on the temper and principles of Cyprian, and afford us some salutary reflections.

To the charge of Pupian—that he was not possessed of humility, he answers thus: “Which of us is most deficient in humility!—I, who daily serve the brethren; and who, with kindness and pleasure, receive every one who comes to the Church; or you, who constitute yourself the bishop of the bishop, and judge of the judge appointed by God for a certain time! The Lord, in the Gospel, when it was said to him, ‘Answerest thou the high priest so?’ still preserving the respect due to the sacerdotal character, said nothing against the high priest, but only cleared his own innocence: and St. Paul, though he might have been justified in using strong language against those who had crucified the Lord, yet answers, ‘I wist not, brethren, that he was the High Priest; for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.’”

“Unless, indeed, you will say—that before the persecution, when you were in communion with me, I was your pastor; but that after the persecution I ceased to be so.—I suppose, then, the persecution exalted you to the high honour of a witness for Christ; and, at the same time, depressed me from my office by a heavy proscription:—yet,—the very edict which proscribed me, acknowledged my rank as a bishop.* Thus, even those, who believed not God who appoints the bishop, credited the devil who proscribed him.

“I speak not these things in a way of boasting, but with grief; since you set yourself up as a judge of God and his Christ, who says to the Apostles,—and, of consequence, to all the bishops, the successors of the Apostles,—He that

heareth you, heareth me; and he that rejecteth you, rejecteth me.’—Hence heresies and schism arise and must arise, whenever persons presumptuously despise the authority of the bishop, who alone is the president of the Church.—What arrogance is this,—to call pastors to your cognizance; and unless they be acquitted at your bar,—behold—the brethren must be pronounced to have been without a bishop for the last six years!

“You say your scruples must be solved:—but, Why did not those martyrs, who, full of the Holy Ghost,—suffered for God and his Christ;—Why did not many of my colleagues, and many of the people, who have been illustrious for their sufferings, indulge similar scruples? Must all—as you affirm—who have communicated with me, be considered as polluted, and as having lost the hope of eternal life!—Pupian alone is upright,—invulnerable,—holy,—chaste: he must not mix with us: he must dwell solitary in paradise!!”

He then exhorts him to return to the bosom of the Church: but at the same time he informs him, that, in the matter of his re-admission, he shall be guided by intimations and admonitions from the Lord, communicated to him possibly by visions and dreams.—This is a language not unusual in Cyprian: but we know too little of the mode of dispensation which the Church, at that time, was under, to judge accurately concerning it:—certainly the age of miracles had not then ceased: and, certainly, instruction by dreams was very much the method used by God in Scripture:—To reject, therefore, wholly the positive declarations of a man of Cyprian's wisdom and veracity, would be inexcusable temerity.—He, repeatedly, speaks of the Lord's directions revealed to him in the manner above mentioned.

If some expressions in the letter be allowed to favour of episcopal haughtiness, which was then growing in the Church, the main tenor of it, nevertheless, contains nothing but what Pupian ought to have attended to most seriously. A readiness to believe stories, which tend to calumniate the worthiest pastors, is a snare which Satan has too successfully laid for the members of the Church in all ages: and, doubtless, much greater circumspec-

* The edict ran thus—“Whoever shall hold or possess any part of the goods of Cæcilius Cyprian, bishop of the Christians,” &c.

• Epis. 69.

tion is required on this head, than many are disposed to pay. The brotherly fellowship of Churches depends, in a great measure, on their endeavours to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Cyprian concludes in this nervous manner: "I have written these things with a pure conscience, and in the firm reliance on my God.—You have my letters; I have yours; both will be recited in the day of judgment before the tribunal of Christ."^e

A controversy now arose among Christians, while the pacific spirit of Valerian

Controversy respecting re-baptization.

continued to protect them, which reflects no honour on any of the parties concerned in it. The question was, whether persons returning from heresies into the Church

ought to be re-baptised? The active spirit of Cyprian was employed, partly by a council in Africa, and partly by his letters, in maintaining that the baptism of heretics was null and void; and that even Novatian baptism ought to be looked upon in the same light. Stephen, bishop of Rome, maintained, that, if persons had been baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, imposition of hands would then be sufficient for their reception into the Church: The point was left undecided, because no party had power to compel others; most Christians, however, have long since agreed with Stephen; and, indeed, it is the voice of good sense as well as of the Church of England,—that the efficacy of a Sacrament, rightly administered, depends not on the character of him that ministers it. But the respect which Cyprian, not undeservedly, had acquired by his labours, his sufferings, and his abilities, procured him a much greater degree of strength than either the importance of his cause or the weight of his arguments merited. Even Firmilian of Cappadocia, in a long letter, supported his side of the question.—This bishop, occasionally, reverts to the case of a woman, who, about twenty-two years before the date of his letter, had professed herself a prophetess, and for a long time had deceived the brethren with her ecstatic raptures, till one of the exorcists confuted her pretensions. It may be worth while just to have mentioned this fact, as it shows that delusions

have ever been raised by Satan to disgrace the work of God. It appears by the same letter,^o—that Stephen behaved with much violence and asperity in the contest;—that he did not even admit to a conference the brethren who came to him from distant parts, if they happened to be of Cyprian's opinion;—but that he denied them the common rights of hospitality.—In the course of this controversy Cyprian decided, and certainly with much propriety,—that those,† whose weak state of health did not permit them to be washed in water, were yet sufficiently baptized by being sprinkled:—He observes, that the virtue of baptism ought not to be estimated, in a carnal manner, by the quantity of external apparatus.

How weak, alas, is man!—A peace of three years has set the members of the Church in a flame among themselves,—and for a matter of trifling import!—And one of the best and wisest men of his day, by zeal for unity, and by caution against innovations, is betrayed into the support of an indefensible point of mere ceremony, which tends to the encouragement of superstition and the weakening of brotherly love!—How soon do we forget that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and joy in the Holy Ghost!"—With what difficulty is the real love of Jesus and its fruits preserved among professors of Christianity! All this proves in the strongest manner,—how mighty and gracious the Lord is in still preserving a Church in the earth;—how dark and corrupt is man;—how active and subtle is Satan; how precious is that blood which cleanses from all sin;—and how true is that book which contains these salutary doctrines and faithfully describes the misery of man!—How safely may we rely on the way of salvation which it teaches; and how pleasing is the prospect which it exhibits of the Church in heaven!

The reader would justly think the time ill-employed in unravelling the niceties of this trifling controversy.—Besides, our attention is called to more important matter:—God prepares a scourge for his forward children: Persecution lowers again with renewed strength; and Christians are called on—to forget their idle internal squabbles,—to humble themselves before HIM,—and to prepare for fresh scenes of horror and desolation.

^e Epia. 69.

^o Epia. 75.

† Epia. 76.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LAST ACTS AND MARTYRDOM OF CYPRIAN.

THE change in the disposition of Valerian towards the Christians, which took place about the year of our Lord two hundred and fifty-seven, is one of the most memorable instances of the instability of human characters. In kindness to them he had surpassed all his predecessors. Even from Philip they had not experienced so much courtesy and friendship. His palace had, usually, been full of the followers of Jesus, and was looked on as a sanctuary. But now, after he had reigned three years, he was induced by his favourite, Maerianus, to commence a deadly persecution. This man dealt largely in magical enchantments and abominable sacrifices; he slaughtered children, and tore out the intestines of new-born babes.* The persecution of Christians was a cruel employment, worthy of a mind so fascinated with diabolical wickedness and folly; and he found in Valerian but too prompt a disciple. This fresh attack on the servants of Christ began in the year two hundred and fifty-seven, and continued during the remainder of the reign of this emperor;—namely, three years and a half. Stephen of Rome appears to have died a natural death about the beginning of it: For, there is no evidence of his martyrdom; and, therefore, we want the proofs which might, in that case, have been afforded, whether his turbulent and aspiring spirit was really combined with genuine Christian affections.—He was succeeded by SIXTUS.

Cyprian, who had escaped two persecutions, was now made the victim of the third,—though by slow degrees, and with circumstances of comparative lenity. Every thing relating to him is so interesting, that it may not be amiss to prosecute his story, in a connected manner, to his death; and to reserve the narrative of other objects of this persecution till afterwards.

He was seized by the servants of Paternus the proconsul of Carthage, and brought into his council-chamber. “The

sacred emperors, Valerian and Gallienus,” says Paternus, “have done me the honour to direct letters to me, in which they have decreed, that all men ought to adore the gods whom the Romans adore: and on pain of being slain with the sword if they refuse. I have heard that you despise the worship of the gods;—whence I advise you to consult for yourself and to honour them.” “I am a Christian,” replied the prelate, “and know no god but the one true God, who created heaven and earth, the sea, and all things in them. This God we Christians serve: To him we pray night and day for all men, and even for the emperors.” “You will die the death of a malefactor, if you persevere in this disposition of mind.”* “That is a good disposition which fears God,” answered Cyprian, “and therefore it must not be changed.” “It is the will, then, of the princes, that, for the present, you should be banished.” “He is no exile,” replied the bishop, “who has God in his heart, for the earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.” Paternus said, “Before you go, tell me,—where are your presbyters: They are said to be in this city!”—With much presence of mind, Cyprian reminded him of the edicts made by the best Roman princes against the practice of informers: “They ought not, therefore, to be discovered by me; and you yourself do not approve of men, who offer themselves voluntarily to you.” “I will make you discover them by torments.” “By me,” the intrepid bishop rejoined, “they shall not be discovered.” “Our princes have ordered that Christians should hold no conventicles; and whoever breaks this rule shall be put to death.” “Do what you are ordered,” Cyprian calmly replied.

Paternus, however, was not disposed to hurt Cyprian. Most probably he respected the character of the man, who, by this time, must have been highly esteemed in Africa on account of a shining series of good works. After having made some intellectual attempts to work on his fears, he sent him into banishment to Curubis, a little town fifty miles from Carthage, situate by the sea, over against Sicily. The place was healthy, the air good, and, by his own desire, he had private lodgings. The citizens of Curubis, during the eleven months which he lived

* Dionysius of Alex.—Euseb. B. 7. C. 10.

* The passion of Cyprian in Pam. Edit.—Fleury’s Hist. B. 7.

among them, treated him with great kindness; and he was repeatedly visited by the Christians.—In this short interval Paternus died.

While the exiled prelate remained by the sea-side, serving his divine Master in holy meditations and useful actions to the best of his power and opportunity, he was informed that the persecutors had seized nine bishops, with several priests and deacons, and a great number of the faithful, even virgins and children; and, after beating them with sticks, had sent them to work in the copper mines among the mountains. Every one of these bishops had been present at the last council of Carthage; their names were Nemesian, Felix, Lucius, a second Felix, Litteus, Polus, Victor, Jader, and Dativus. I cannot account for the milder treatment which Cyprian received from the Roman governors in any other way than by supposing, that an extraordinary and reverential respect was paid to his superior quality, labours, and virtues. Be that as it may, Providence certainly favoured him in a peculiar manner. But his sympathizing spirit could not but be with his brethren:—His sentiments and his feelings are strongly expressed in a letter to Nemesian and the rest.

“Your glory requires, blessed and beloved brethren, that I ought to come and embrace you, were it not that the confession of the same name has confined me also to this place: but if it be forbidden me to come to you in body, I am present with you in spirit and affection; and I endeavour to express my very soul to you in letters.—How do I exult in your honours, and reckon myself a partner with you,—though not in suffering,—yet in the fellowship of love!—How can I hold my peace, when I hear such glorious things of dearest brethren! How hath the Divine dispensations honoured you! Part of you have already finished the course of martyrdom, and are now receiving crowns of righteousness from the Lord; and the rest, as yet in prisons, or in mines and bonds, exhibit, in the tediousness of their afflictions, still great examples of patience and perseverance, which will arm and strengthen the brethren, at the same time that these long-continued torments will advance the sufferers to a higher proficiency in Christian glory, and ensure to them a proportional reward in heaven.

“In truth,—that the Lord has thus

honoured you, affords me no surprise when I reflect on your blameless lives and faithfulness; your firm adherence to the divine ordinance; your integrity, concord, humility, diligence; mercy in cherishing the poor; constancy in defence of the truth; and strictness of Christian discipline:—And, that nothing might be wanting in you as patterns of good works, even now, by confession with the mouth and by suffering with the body, you stir up the minds of the brethren to divine martyrdom, and distinguish yourselves as leaders of eminent goodness; nor do I doubt, but that the flock will imitate their pastors and presidents, and be crowned, in like manner, by our common Lord.—That you have been grievously beaten with clubs, and have been initiated, by that punishment, in Christian confession, is a thing not to be lamented. The body of a Christian trembles not on account of clubs: All his hope is in wood.* The servant of Christ acknowledges the emblem of his salvation: Redeemed by a cross of wood to eternal life, by this wood he is advanced to his crown. O happy feet! shackled indeed at present with fetters; ye will quickly finish a glorious journey to Christ!—Let malice and cruelty bind you as they please, ye will soon pass from earth and its sorrows to the kingdom of heaven.—In the mines ye have not a bed on which the body may be refreshed;—nevertheless, Christ is your rest and consolation: Your limbs are fatigued with labour and lie on the ground: but so to lie down, when you have Christ with you, is no punishment.—Filth and dirt defile your limbs, and ye have no baths at hand; but, remember, ye are inwardly washed from all uncleanness.—Your allowance of bread is but scanty; be it so,—man doth not live by bread alone, but by the word of God. Ye have no proper clothes to defend you from the cold;—but he, who has put on Christ, is clothed abundantly.”

He afterwards comforts them, by suitable arguments, under the loss of means of grace and of public worship; and

* I observe once for all,—that the want of a just classical taste like that of the Augustan age, and the excess of false rhetorical ornaments, appear every where in Cyprian's writings. This was not the defect of the man, but of the times: and the meanness of the pun in this place will be forgiven by all, who relish the preciousness of the doctrine connected with it.

speaks of the Lord as rewarding the patience and fortitude of his saints, which virtues are indeed his own work in their hearts. "For it is of him that we conquer; it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you."—He shows, hence, the great sin of unbelief—in not trusting him who promises his aid to those who confess him, and in not fearing him who threatens eternal punishment to those who deny him. In conclusion, he begs their earnest prayers,—that he and they may be freed from the snares and the darkness of the world; and that those, who, in the bond of love and peace, had stood together against the injuries of heretics and the pressures of the heathen, might together rejoice in the celestial mansions.*

Nemesian and the other bishops returned him an answer full of affection and gratitude, from three different places in which they were confined; and they acknowledge the pecuniary assistance which he had sent them.

Cyprian wrote also to Rogatian the younger, and to other confessors who were in prison,—most probably at Carthage:—He animates them in his usual manner, "to despise present afflictions through the hope of future joys;" and he speaks with much pleasure of some women and boys who were partners of their sufferings. He recommends to them the example of the elder Rogatian, and of the ever peaceable and sober Felicissimus,† who had consummated their martyrdom already.

In the year two hundred and fifty-seven, Cyprian was permitted to return from exile; and he lived in a garden near Car-

Cyprian
restored
from exile,
A. D. 257.

thage, which was now providentially restored to him, though he had sold it at his first conversion. His liberal spirit would have inclined him once more to sell it for the relief of the needy, if he had not feared lest he should excite the envy of the persecutors. Here he regulated the affairs of the Church and distributed to the poor what he had left. He sent messengers to Rome for the purpose of clearing up certain indistinct information which had

been received concerning the persecution having broken out afresh; and he immediately communicated to the brethren* the following facts, namely—That Valerian had given orders that bishops, presbyters, and deacons should be put to death without delay;—that senators, noblemen, and knights should be degraded and deprived of their property; and, that if they still persisted in being Christians, they should lose their lives;—that women of quality should be deprived of their property and banished;—and that all Caesar's freedmen, who should have confessed, should be stripped of their goods, be chained, and sent to work on his estates. These were Valerian's directions to the senate; and he sent letters, to the same effect, to the governors of provinces: "These letters," said Cyprian, "we daily expect to arrive. We stand, however, in the firmness of faith, in patient expectation of suffering, and in humble hope of obtaining, from the Lord's help and kindness, the crown of eternal life." He mentions also the daily ferocity with which,—he understood,—the persecution was carried on at Rome in all its horrors; and, he gives a particular instance of it, in the martyrdom of Xystus, the bishop.—He begs that the intelligence may be circulated through Africa; "That we may all think of death; but not more of death than of immortality; and, that, in the fulness of faith, we may, rather with joy than fear, expect the approaching events."

Galerius Maximus had succeeded Paternus in the proconsulate, and Cyprian was daily expected to be sent for. In this awful crisis a number of senators and others, considerable for their offices or their quality, came to him. Ancient friendship melted the minds of some of them towards him; and they offered to conceal him in country-places; but his soul was now thirsting for martyrdom. The uncertainty of tedious banishment could not be agreeable to one, who had had so much experience of that kind; and, Valerian's law being expressly levelled at men of his character, there seemed little probability left of his being long concealed. Further, I believe the generous temper of this prelate would have been hurt, if the safety of his former Pagan friends had been endangered on his account. He might, therefore, hesi-

* Epist. 78, 79, 80.

† He thus distinguishes this humble, patient martyr, from the factious character of the same name. Epist. 81.

* Epist. 82.

tate to accept their offers, though, according to the steady maxims of his conscientious prudence, he would, by no means, do any thing to accelerate his own death. Pontius his deacon tells us,—that in opposition to the intemperate zeal of those who were for giving themselves up to martyrdom, Cyprian had always on this head conscientious fears, lest he should displease God by throwing away his life. In fact, he continued still at Carthage, exhorting the faithful, and wishing, that when he should suffer martyrdom, death might find him thus employed in the service of his God. Being informed, however, that the proconsul, then at Utica, had sent soldiers for him, he was induced to comply, for a season, with the advice of his friends, by retiring to some place of concealment, that he might not suffer at Utica, but,—that if he was called to martyrdom,—he might finish his life among his own people at Carthage: So he states the matter in the last of his letters to the clergy and the people. “Here in this concealment, I wait for the return of the proconsul to Carthage, ready to appear before him, and to say what shall be given me at the hour. Do you, dear brethren,—Do you, agreeably to the instructions you have always received from me, continue still and quiet: Let none of you excite any tumult on account of the brethren, or offer himself voluntarily to the Gentiles.—He, who is seized and delivered up, ought to speak: The Lord, who dwells in us, will speak at that hour: Confession rather than profession is our duty.”

The proconsul returned to Carthage, and Cyprian returned to his garden. There he was seized by two officers, who had been sent with soldiers for that purpose. They obliged him to sit between themselves in a chariot; and they conveyed him to a place named Sextus, six miles from Carthage, by the sea-side. The proconsul lodged there on account of indisposition; and he gave orders that Cyprian should be carried back to the house of the chief officer, about the distance of a stadium* from the pretorium; and—that the consideration of the business should be deferred till the next day.—The news spread through Carthage: The celebrity of the bishop, on account of his good works, drew prodigious crowds to the scene; not only of Christians, but

of infidels, who revered eminent virtue in distress.

The chief officer guarded him,—but, in a courteous manner; so that he was permitted to have his friends about him as usual. The Christians passed the night in the street before his lodgings; and the benevolence of Cyprian moved him to direct a particular attention to be paid to the young women who were among the multitude.

The next day the proconsul sent for Cyprian, who walked to the prætorium attended by a vast concourse of people. The proconsul not yet appearing, he was ordered to wait for him in a private place. He sat down, and being in a great perspiration, a soldier, who had been a Christian, offered him fresh clothes: “Shall we,” says Cyprian, “seek a remedy for that which may last no longer than to-day?” The arrival of the proconsul was announced, and this venerable servant of Christ was brought before him into the judgment-hall.—“Are you Thascius Cyprian?” “I am.” “Are you he whom the Christians call their bishop?” “I am.” “Our princes have ordered you to worship the gods.” “That I will not do.” “You would judge better to consult your safety, and not to despise the gods.” “My safety and my strength is Christ the Lord, whom I desire to serve for ever.” “I pity your case,” says the proconsul, “and could wish to consult for you.” “I have no desire,” says the prelate, “that things should be otherwise with me, than that I may adore my God, and hasten to him with all the ardour of my soul;—for the afflictions of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” The proconsul grew red with anger; and immediately pronounced sentence of death in the following terms:—“You have lived sacrilegiously a long time; you have formed a society of impious conspirators; you have shown yourself an enemy to the gods and their religion, and have not hearkened to the equitable counsels of our princes; you have ever been a father and a ringleader of the impious sect.—You shall therefore be an example to the rest,—that, by the shedding of your blood, they may learn their duty. Let Thascius Cyprian, who refuses to sacrifice to the gods, be put to death by the sword.” “God be praised!” said the martyr; and while they were leading

* A hundred and twenty-five paces.

him away, a multitude of the people followed and cried, "Let us die with our holy bishop."

A troop of soldiers attended the martyr; and the officers marched on each side of him. They led him into a plain sur-

Execution
of Cyprian
A. D. 258.

rounded with trees, and many climbed up to the top of them, to see him at a distance. Cyprian took off his mantle, and fell on his knees and worshipped his God:—then he put off his inner garment and remained in his shirt.—The executioners being come, Cyprian ordered twenty-five golden denarii to be given to him; he himself bound the napkin over his own eyes; and a presbyter and a deacon tied his hands, and the Christians placed before him napkins and handkerchiefs to receive his blood.—His head was then severed from his body by the sword.*

His biographer Pontius represents himself as wishing to have died with him: and, as divided between the joy of his victorious martyrdom, and sorrow that himself was left behind.

Thus,—after an eventful and instructive period of about twelve years since his conversion,—after a variety of toils and exercises among friends, and open foes and nominal Christians, by a death more gentle than commonly fell to the lot of martyrs, rested at length in Jesus the truly magnanimous and benevolent spirit of Cyprian of Carthage.—An extraordinary personage, surely! And one whose character calls for the most distinct review and illustration in our power.—An attempt of this sort we would make in the next chapter, however imperfect, or inadequate it may prove.—Let writers, whose views are secular, celebrate their heroes, their statesmen, and their philosophers; but let us,—even though a Christian's taste be denied,—at least take advantage of the rare felicity of the present times of civil liberty, and endeavour, in employing the press, to do some justice to the virtues of men, who, while they lived, "set their affections on things above," and who, after death, according to modern sentiments of worth and excellence,—are almost, assigned to contemptuous oblivion.—And, may their memorial be blessed for ever!!

CHAPTER XV.

CYPRIAN COMPARED WITH ORIGEN.

THE east and the west beheld at the same time these two men, in talents, activity, and attainments much superior to the rest of the Christian world. The Roman seems, beyond contradiction, to have much excelled the Grecian in those things in which true Christian virtue consists; yet as the latter, by the fruits of his life,—though they were miserably tarnished and clouded by a depraved philosophy,—still claims a just place among saints, it may answer some valuable purpose, not impertinent to the design of this History, to compare, in several particulars, the respective endowments, defects, and excellences of these extraordinary men.

1. There may have been as pious and holy men as Cyprian, in the interval of time between the Apostles and him, but we have no opportunity of knowing any other Christian so well. The distinct particularity of the accounts concerning him makes his character remarkably deserving of our attention. The dealings of God with a sinner, at his first conversion, often give a strong tincture to the whole future life. Cyprian was intended for very great and important services in the Church; and, those—of an active nature, and attended with an almost uninterrupted series of sufferings;—such as no man could perform to the glory of God, but one, who knew assuredly the ground on which he stood, by a strong work of the Divine Spirit on his soul. His experience in conversion he himself describes in his letter to Donatus.—His reception of Christianity was not the effect of mere reasoning or speculation. It was not carried on in a scholastic or philosophical manner, but may truly be said to have been "in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power." He felt the doctrines of the Gospel,—namely, the grace of God; forgiveness of sins by Jesus Christ; and the influence of the Holy Ghost,—powerful, exuberant, and victorious. His soul was brought into the love of God, and that of the purest kind, tempered ever with humility and godly fear; and it is evident—that he always saw the work to be of God, and beheld nothing in himself as wise, holy, and glorious; and that a spirit of thankfulness for redeeming love, of simple de-

* Acts of his Martyrdom. Passion of Cyprian in Pam. Pontius's Life of Cyprian, and Fleury's History.

pendence on the divine promises, and of steady charity to God and man, was the result. His race was of no long duration; only about twelve years; and by far the greater part of the time he was bishop of Carthage. He lived a Christian life; and no part of it was exempt from much labour or much affliction. He seems never to have known what it was to settle into a lukewarm state. The fire which was first kindled in him, burnt serene and steady to the end of his days.—I am aware that Mosheim charges him with an ambitious, domineering spirit, that invaded the rights of the lower clergy and people.* But I take the liberty of assuring the cautious reader, that this excellent and very judicious SECULAR historian, is not to be trusted in his accounts of men of REAL HOLINESS. From the most attentive review which I have been able to make of the character of the African prelate, by a repeated perusal of the existing evidence, especially his epistles, I cannot see any thing on which to ground such a censure. He did nothing, in general, without the clergy and people. He was ever sedulous in promoting the good of the whole. The episcopal authority was, in his time, at no very blameable height in the Church: nevertheless, through the gradual growth of superstition, it was, naturally, advancing to an excess of dignity; and it is not to be denied that some few expressions savouring of haughtiness and asperity are to be found in the writings of Cyprian.—But these few expressions were evidently the effect of particular provocation;—nor is there the least evidence that ambition was his vice. Candour would rather say, he was, in general, influenced by a very fervent zeal, supported in its exertions by a temper remarkably active and sanguine. But whoever looks into the original records with an expectation of finding any thing selfish, proud or domineering in his general conduct, will be disappointed; and, on the contrary, will be struck with the steady tenor of gentleness, charity, and humility. In fine, if he had not been a CHRISTIAN, one might have held him forth to the world as a GREAT man;—if it be the part of a great man to unite, in a large and capacious mind, many virtues, and each of them in a high degree of perfection;—virtues too, which are opposite in their nature,

and which rarely meet in firm consistence in the same subject;—for example, vigour and mildness, magnanimity and mercy, fortitude and prudence, warmth of temper and accuracy of judgment, and, above all,—zeal and discretion.

In Origen's conversion we see nothing remarkable. He received Christianity in a way of education, rather than by quick, lively, and decisive operations of the Holy Spirit. It is not usual with God to make use of such persons for extraordinary services, like those for which Cyprian, in the prime of life, appears to have been selected from the world. Origen's views of the peculiar truths of Christianity were,—to say no more, too faint and general;—not ever sufficiently distinguished from moral and philosophical religion. He bore persecution, when young, with much zeal and honesty; but he lived many years in peace and prosperity. Much respected and sought after by philosophers, highly esteemed and honoured by courts and by the great, he lived a scholastic rather than an active life in the Church; always fully employed indeed, but more like a man of letters than a minister of the Gospel; ever bent on promoting truth and holiness so far as he knew them; but always leaving one's mind dissatisfied on account of the defectiveness of his views. His last scenes are the most satisfactory and the most decisively Christian. He suffered persecution with the patience and honesty of a martyr; and proved INDEED whose disciple he was on the whole. Mosheim charges him with dishonesty in his arguments against Celsus; and says, that any one that has penetration and judgment may discern it.* It would have been more to the purpose to have pointed out the instances of dishonest argumentation, which he alludes to. My examination of the tract in question induces me to dissent from this learned historian; and further, I am convinced that great uprightness of mind was a ruling feature in Origen's character.—But it is not the practice of modern writers to be candid in their judgment of the ancient Christians.

After this general review of these two men, and, after it has been admitted that integrity and fairness of mind were possessed by both in a very great degree, it

* Eccles. History, Century III. Chap. 2.

* Mosheim's Eccl. History, Century III. Chap. 3.

may be natural to ask—In what consisted the superior excellence of Cyprian!—The general answer to such an inquiry is—The manner of their first conversion has appeared to have been strikingly different in the two cases; and still more so.—The work of God upon their hearts afterwards.—But besides this,—

2. Cyprian was possessed of a simplicity of TASTE to which Origen seems ever to have been a stranger. By simplicity of taste I mean here a genuine and unadulterated relish for the doctrine and spirit of the Christian religion, just as it stands in its real nature. It is possible for a person very eminent in this gift,—which is purely divine and spiritual,—to be, in no way, remarkable for his knowledge of evangelical truth: In respect of knowledge he may not much exceed another who is far his inferior in the former grace of the Spirit: The light and means of information are very different in different ages of the Church; and it is evident that the third century suffered a decline in illumination. But where a man is deficient in knowledge, yet if his simplicity of Christian taste be very great, he will be silent on those subjects which he does not understand, or at least he will be extremely cautious in opposing any part of divine truth. This was Cyprian's case. He appears not, for instance, to have understood the doctrine of the election of grace. Since Justin's days the knowledge of that article of faith was departing from the Church.—But, he opposed it not.—Origen, less humble and less submissive to divine instruction, and finding more resources in his reasoning powers, dares to oppose it by a contrary statement.*

In Cyprian this simplicity appears in a supreme degree. He never trifles with Scripture, or sets up his reason against it. Unencumbered with the apparatus of Grecian philosophy, and possessed of what is much better,—plain good sense, he takes, always, the words of Scripture in their obvious, and most natural meaning; and thence he has sufficiently proved his point, when he has supported it by an apposite quotation. His humble spirit lives to the divine word: and hence, faith, patience, charity, heavenly-mindedness, have full dominion in his soul; and hence also, his sentiments have a strength, a purity, a perspicuity, pecu-

liarily the property of those whose religious taste is altogether scriptural. Here it is that Cyprian and Origen are diametrically opposite to each other. The latter is full of endless allegorical interpretations, and of platonic notions concerning the soul of the world, the transmigration of spirits, free-will, and the pre-existence of souls. The first and simple sense of Scripture he too often ventures to reject entirely.* David's sin in the affair of Uriah he cannot admit. It seems, he had not such strong and palpable proof of his own innate depravity, as to suppose it possible for so good a man to fall so foully. He has recourse, therefore, to a hidden and abstruse sense. His numberless comments on Scripture constitute a system of fanciful allegory, which pervades the whole of the sacred oracles: The just and plain sense is much neglected; and the whole is covered with thick clouds of mysticism and chimerical philosophy. He labours, it is true, to support the faith, which was once delivered to the saints; but, like his platonic master, Ammonius, he introduces large quantities of figurative trash, which will not incorporate with Christian doctrine.—Thus, by accommodating his interpretations to the then reigning literary taste, he gained to himself, indeed, a celebrity of character among the heathen, even among the great and noble, but threw all things into inextricable ambiguity.—His quickness of parts and his superior ingenuity served only to entangle him more effectually, and to enable him to move in the chaos of his own formation with an ease and rapidity that rendered him unconscious of the difficulties in which he had involved himself.

One remarkable consequence of this difference of character was, that while Origen, among the Pagans, succeeded in gaining the favour of the great, and was heard by them with patience, Cyprian could not be endured in his preaching or writings,—except by real Christians.—Another consequence is this,—It is no easy thing to vindicate the soundness of the former in Christian principles:—The latter challenges the severest scrutiny.—He is christian throughout.

Such is the difference between a man of simplicity and a man of philosophy and religion; and the mind, on this occasion, is led to compare the effect of a

* Philocalia xxi.

* Philoc. Chap. 1. page 30.

philosophical and of a philological spirit. Origen had the former, Cyprian the latter. Eloquence was his distinguishing accomplishment; and he possessed all the powers of it in a very high degree, according to the taste of the age,—which was far from being the best. And here, I would humbly submit to the consideration of the pious and well-disposed,—whether the knowledge of grammar, history, criticism, and of oratory, theoretical and practical, properly regulated by common sense and in subordination to divine grace, be not much less dangerous, and, in their way, more useful endowments for a minister of Christ, than deep researches into philosophy of any kind?—Far, very far, from meaning to insinuate that the studies of metaphysics and of natural philosophy should be entirely excluded from the education of persons, who mean to be pastors,—I would be understood to suggest,—that a less proportion of THESE, and a greater proportion of THOSE than what agrees with the present fashionable taste, might be more advantageous to the Church. The reasoning powers might find in the former an useful exercise and improvement, without the same danger of presumption which so strongly adheres to the latter.*

3. Having compared the lives and the tempers of these men, let us now view the PRINCIPLES of each. Of Cyprian, after the many quotations already given from his writings little need be added. Nevertheless, as it has lain more in our way to consider him as addressing Christians than pagans or infidels, I shall select a letter of his to Demetrian, a persecutor of Christians in Africa, in which his manner of preaching to men altogether profane and unconverted is observable.

He denounces to them the plain threatenings of eternal punishment. "There remains hereafter† an eternal prison, constant flame, and perpetual punishment. There the groans of suppliants will not be heard, because here they disregarded the terror of God's indignation." He bids them solemnly look into themselves, and appeals to the conscience as affording

full proof of guilt before God. And he aggravates the charge of condemnation, because, amidst the MISERIES of the times, men did not repent. After exposing the folly of idolatry, and exhibiting, in lively colours, the all-important scenes of the last judgment, he concludes with this Christian exhortation, which is introduced in the true taste and order of things, after he had first denounced the terrors of the law. "Provide then for your security and life, while you may. We offer you the most salutary counsel; and because we are forbidden to hate you or to requite evil, we exhort you, while there is time, to please God and to emerge from the profound night of superstition into the fair light of true religion. We envy not your advantages, nor do we hide the divine benefits. We return good will for your hatred; and, for the torments and punishments, which are inflicted upon us, we show you the paths of salvation.—Believe, and live; and do ye, who persecute us for a time, rejoice with us for ever. When you depart hence, there will be no room for repentance: no method of being reconciled to God: here, eternal life is either lost or secured; here, by the worship of God and the fruit of faith, provision is made for eternal salvation: and let no man be retarded, either by his sins or by his years, from coming to obtain it. No repentance is too late, while a man remains in this world.

"An access lies open to the grace of God; and, to those, who seek and understand the truth, the access is easy. Even, in the very exit of life, pray for remission of sins, and implore the only living and true God with confession and faith: Pardon is granted to him who confesses his sin; and saving grace from the divine goodness is conferred on the believer; and, thus may a man pass from death to immortality in his very last moments. By subduing death through the trophy of his cross, by redeeming the believer with the price of his blood, by reconciling man to God the Father, and by quickening the dead with celestial regeneration, Christ imparts to us these great mercies. Him, if it be possible, let us all follow;—let us be baptized in his name. He opens to us the way of life; he brings us back to paradise. He leads us to the heavenly kingdom: and we shall always live with him. By him made sons of God, we shall rejoice with him for ever: Redeemed by his blood, we shall be Christians

* These sentiments are certainly favoured by the comparison of Cyprian and Origen.—It is true, this is only a single instance of such comparison:—but, I believe, it will be very difficult to find examples of a contrary tendency.

† Pam. ad Demetrian.

with Christ in glory: we shall be the blessed of God the Father; and shall give him thanks to all eternity.—The man, who was obnoxious to death, and has been made a sure partaker of immortality, cannot but be filled with joy and gratitude for evermore."

With such an affectionate spirit, and with such clearness of doctrine did Cyprian preach justification, BY FAITH ONLY, to the unconverted. It must not be denied, —that, in his address to men, who had already "tasted that the Lord is gracious," there is not the same evangelical purity. In his treatise on Good Works, he says very excellent things on the duty of alms-giving: but he sometimes uses language that might easily be construed into the language of merit; and as he had not learnt to distinguish the Apocrypha from the Old Testament, he supports his ideas with quotations from Tobit and Ecclesiasticus. We have had,—what he had not,—an experience of the evil tendency of any expressions, which, in the smallest degree, countenance the supposition of the efficacy of human works in washing away the pollution of sin, whether contracted before or after baptism. We know too, from the dependence on the divine grace, and on the Spirit's illumination, which Cyprian and many other fathers of the same stamp habitually exercised,—besides the testimony of their holy lives,—that the same expressions mean not with them what they do in the mouths of moderns, who too often appear to be full of self-righteousness and of contempt both of the grace of Christ and of the work of the Holy Ghost. We are sure, that the former mean no opposition to the free gift of God, because they are humble: whereas, it is but too evident that the latter do,—because they are proud, and scorn the whole work of the Spirit of God in the formation of the new creature. It had been well, however, if holy men had never given a handle to the profane to elaborate the doctrines of the Gospel. But I have before observed, that Cyprian's views of grace were not equally clear with those of the first Christians: Yet, in every fundamental principle, he speaks as the Oracles of God; and in his addresses to Pagans, Christians, or Jews, he is always fervent and zealous. His tract on Patience, as a practical performance, and that on the Lord's Prayer, as a doctrinal one, deserve the highest praise.

In general, his works are excellent in their kind, and he must have a poor taste indeed in godliness who will not find the perusal of them refreshing to his soul. Nevertheless, Cyprian shines much more in practical than in speculative divinity. The shortness of his Christian life and the pressure of his employments will easily account for this.

I wish it were as easy to clear the doctrinal character of Origen from reproach. The ancients themselves were much divided in their views of his opinion concerning the Son of God. It is certain that the Arians of the fourth century seemed to receive some countenance from him; and men who had so very little assistance from precedents, were glad to catch at the shadow of an argument drawn from his illustrious name.—But what, if his Arianism were indeed full and confessed on all hands,—What would such a fact avail as an argument,—I say, not against the Scriptures,—but against the joint consent of the whole Church for three hundred years? Even the very opposition made against his character by many, shows how zealous the Church had ever been in the defence of the doctrine of the Trinity.—Here is open a wide field of controversy; but little profit is to be expected from traversing it.—The writings of Origen against Celsus, in which he ably defends Christianity against philosophy and paganism, and the Philocalia of the same author, furnish sufficiently decisive passages against Arian tenets,—if they were not embarrassed by others of a more doubtful cast.

It is probable, however, that one who thought so rapidly, wrote so much, and had his eyes so steadily fixed on his philosophy, must have dropped many things, which he would not have seriously maintained if he had ever carefully reviewed them. That he never meant to hold any thing different from the orthodox creed, may be inferred from the pains which he took against heretics, as well as from his general character. Some, therefore, of his indefensible sentences ought to be considered as containing queries and conjectures rather than settled opinions. Athanasius must be allowed to have been a judge of this matter; and we believed him to be sound, and quoted his writings to prove our Lord's co-eternity and co-essentiality with the Father. And he, likewise, observes,—that what things Origen wrote by way of controversy and dis-

putation are not to be looked on as his own sentiments.*

After all, the best defence of this great man consists in the general holiness of his life, and in his patient suffering for the faith of Christ in old age: And I rejoice that, amidst all the trash with which his writings abound, we have yet this unquestionable testimony—that he kept the commandments of God, and had the faith of Jesus. The loss of his voluminous commentaries, and of his other numerous works, is, perhaps, not much to be regretted. There are two sentences in them which merit particular attention. He thus speaks on the words, Rom. iii. "we conclude, that a man is justified by faith," &c. **THE JUSTIFICATION OF FAITH ONLY IS SUFFICIENT; SO THAT IF ANY PERSON ONLY BELIEVE, HE MAY BE JUSTIFIED, THOUGH NO GOOD WORK HATH BEEN FILLED BY HIM;**"—and again, on the case of the penitent thief, "he was justified by faith without the works of the law; because, concerning these, the Lord did not inquire what he had done before; neither did he stay to ask what work he was purposing to perform after he had believed;—but, the man being justified by his confession only, Jesus, who was going to paradise, took him as a companion, and carried him there."

Thus, the precious doctrine of justification, though much sullied and covered with rubbish, was yet alive, in the third century, even in the faith of the most dubious characters among the Anti-Nicene fathers. This it was that kept Origen, with all "his hay and stubble,"† firm on Christian foundations, and distinguished him radically from an adversary of Christ.

4. If we compare the public life of these two men, the Grecian shines in a scholastic, the Roman in a pastoral capacity. Origen appears as an author, and moves in a sphere calculated for the learned. Cyprian is a preacher, and, like the Apostles, addresses equally all sorts of men. The latter, on account of the pride of corrupt nature, was most likely to be regarded by the poor: He valued not refinement of composition: His aim was to reach the heart and the conscience, and to reduce every religious consideration to real practice. Origen, however, was usefully employed in untying knotty specu-

lations, in refuting heresies, and in recommending Christianity, or something like Christianity, to the learned world. No doubt, his labours would be of some advantage amidst the mischief which the accommodating scheme produced; but the pastoral exhortations of Cyprian, as they would not be received at all by prejudiced philosophers, so, where they were received, left effects of unadulterated piety, through the divine influence that attended them. As a Christian bishop, scarcely any age has seen his superior in activity, disinterestedness, and steady attention to discipline. He was equally remote from the extremes of negligent remissness, and impracticable severity: and he possessed a charity and a patience unwearied, and ever consistent. He may safely be recommended as a model to all pastors, and particularly to those of rank and dignity throughout Christendom. Whoever feels a desire to serve God in the most arduous and the most important of all professions, may profitably,—next after the study of the sacred oracles, give days and nights to Cyprian's writings.—All his genuine compositions,—if you except his correspondence and controversy with Stephen of Rome,—deserve a diligent perusal; yet no man must be expected to relish them thoroughly, unless he himself has experienced the new birth unto righteousness. A truly regenerated person will not only felish them, but also will not fail to be affected with a generous glow of the purest godliness, upon reading them with care and attention.—The frequency of such bishops in Europe is devoutly to be wished! What avail good sense, taste, learning, without Christian simplicity—and a heart above the world, its flatteries or its frowns!—Contemplate—study the character of the prelate of Carthage, and you will learn what Christian bishops once were, and what they still ought to be.

5. But the chief point of view in which the contrast between these two persons is most striking, is in the consequences and fruits of their labours and their writings. Before Cyprian's time, Africa appears to have been in no very flourishing state with respect to Christianity. Within twelve years he was the instrument of most material service in recovering many apostates, in reforming discipline, and in reviving the essence of godliness. His example was most powerful and effectual among them for ages. The honours paid

* Cave's Life of Origen.

† See Bishop Beveridge on the Articles of the Church of England.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 12.

to his memory demonstrate this: Moreover, it is certain, that his diocese, once the scene of Punic greatness, continued, long after, one of the most precious gardens of Christianity, as I shall have abundant occasion to show in the course of this History,—if I should be permitted to continue it.—But the mischiefs of Origen's taste and spirit in religion were inexpressible.—Talents and learning are coveted by mankind; he, however, who possesses much of them, has the more abundant need to learn humility and divine caution. For, if he do not evidently benefit mankind by them, he is in danger of doing much mischief. No man, not altogether unsound and hypocritical, ever injured the Church of Christ more than Origen did. From the fanciful mode of allegory, introduced by him and uncontrained by Scriptural rule and order, arose a vitiated method of commenting on the sacred pages; which has been succeeded by the contrary extreme—namely, a contempt of types and figures altogether; and, in a similar way, his fanciful ideas of *law and spirit* tended to remove from men's minds all just conceptions of genuine spirituality.—A thick mist for ages pervaded the Christian world, supported and strengthened by his absurd allegorical manner of interpretation. The learned alone were considered as guides implicitly to be followed; and the vulgar, —when the literal sense was hissed off the stage,—had nothing to do but to follow their authority wherever it might conduct them.—It was not till the days of Luther and Melancthon, that this evil was fairly and successfully opposed.

If I have carried the parallel to a greater length than the just laws of history allow, the importance of the case is my apology. Let the whole be attentively weighed by the serious reader, in connexion with two passages of St. Paul: the first of which is,—“I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy, lest your minds be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ;”—and the second,—“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

CHAPTER XVI.

OTHER PARTICULARS OF VALERIAN'S PERSECUTION.

It has been already mentioned, that Cyprian heard of the death of Sixtus, bishop of

Rome, a little before his own martyrdom. In pursuance of the cruel orders of Valerian, for carrying on the persecution, that prelate had been seized with some of his clergy. While they were carrying him to execution, Laurentius, his chief deacon, followed him weeping, and said, “Whither goest thou, Father, without thy son?” Sixtus said, “You shall follow me in three days.” We may suppose him to have been possessed with the spirit of prophecy in saying this, because we are certain that miraculous gifts were as yet by no means extinct in the Church: But, perhaps, the declaration was not out of the reach of common sagacity from the circumstances of affairs.

After Sixtus's death,* the Prefect of Rome, moved by an idle report of the immense riches of the Roman Church, sent for Laurentius, and ordered him to deliver them up. Laurentius replied, “Give me a little time to set every thing in order, and to take an account of each particular.” The Prefect granted him three days time. In that space Laurentius collected all the Poor who were supported by the Roman Church, and going to the Prefect, said, “Come, behold the riches of our God; you shall see a large court full of golden vessels.” The Prefect followed him, but seeing all the poor people, he turned to Laurentius with looks full of anger. “What are you displeased at?” said the martyr!—“The gold, you so eagerly desire, is but a vile metal taken out of the earth, and serves as an incitement to all sorts of crimes: the true gold is that Light whose disciples these poor men are. The misery of their bodies is an advantage to their souls: Sin is the real disease of mankind: The great ones of the earth are the truly poor and contemptible. These are the treasures which I promised you; to which I will add precious stones.—Behold these virgins and widows; they are the Church's crown; make use of these riches for the advantage of Rome, of the emperor, and of yourself.”

Doubtless, if the Prefect's mind had been at all disposed to receive an instructive lesson, he would have met with one here. The liberality of Christians in maintaining a great number of objects, and in looking for no recompense but that which shall take place at the resurrection of the just, while they patiently bore affliction, and humbly rested on an

* Aug. Vol. 9. p. 52.—See Fleury, B. 7.

unseen Saviour, was perfectly agreeable to the mind of HIM, who bids his disciples, in a well-known parable, to relieve those who cannot recompense them.* How glorious was this scene! at a time when the rest of the world were tearing one another in pieces, and when philosophers made not the slightest attempts to alleviate the miseries of their fellow-creatures!—But, as the persecutors would not hear the doctrines explained, so neither would they see the precepts exemplified with patience. “Do ye mock me!” cries the Prefect; “I know, ye value yourselves for contemning death, and therefore ye shall not die at once.” Then he caused Laurentius to be stripped, extended, and fastened to a gridiron, and, in that manner, to be broiled to death by a slow fire. When he had continued a considerable time with one side to the fire, he said to the Prefect, “Let me be turned, I am sufficiently broiled on one side.” And when they had turned him, he looked up to heaven and prayed for the conversion of Rome; and then gave up the ghost!

I give this story at some length, because it has sufficient marks of credibility, and is supported by the evidence of Augustine.—I am not disposed to follow Fleury in various other narratives. In subjects of martyrology this author seems directly opposite to our countryman Gibbon. Whatever judgment these historians possessed, remained, in this matter, equally unexercised by both. Indiscriminate incredulity is as blind as indiscriminate belief.—I may not always succeed, but I certainly endeavour to separate truth from fiction, and neither to impose on my readers nor myself.

At Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, a child, named Cyril, showed uncommon fortitude. He called on the name of Jesus Christ continually, nor could threats or blows prevent him from openly avowing Christianity.—Several children of the same age persecuted him; and his own father, with the applauses of many persons for his zeal in the support of paganism, drove him out of his house. The judge ordered him to be brought before him, and said, “My child, I will pardon your faults; and your father shall receive you again: It is in your power to enjoy your father’s estate, provided you are wise, and take care of your own interest.”

“I rejoice to bear your reproaches,” replied the child;—“God will receive me: I am not sorry that I am expelled out of our house: I shall have a better mansion: I fear not death, because it will introduce me into a better life.” Divine Grace having enabled him to witness this good confession, he was ordered to be bound and led, as it were, to execution. The judge had given secret orders to bring him back again, hoping that the sight of the fire might overcome his resolution. Cyril remained inflexible. The humanity of the judge induced him still to continue his remonstrances. “Your fire and your sword,” says the young martyr, “are insignificant. I go to a better house; I go to more excellent riches: Dispatch me presently, that I may enjoy them.” The spectators wept through compassion. “Ye should rather rejoice,” says he, “in conducting me to punishment. Ye know not what a city I am going to inhabit, nor what is my hope.” Thus he went to his death, and was the admiration of the whole city.—Such an example illustrates well that Scripture,—“Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast ordained strength.”

There were at Antioch a presbyter and a layman, the former named Sapricius, the latter Nicephorus, who, through some misunderstanding, after a remarkable intimacy, became so completely estranged, that they would not even salute each other in the street. Nicephorus after a time relented, begged forgiveness of his fault, and took repeated measures to procure reconciliation,—but in vain. He even ran to the house of Sapricius, and throwing himself at his feet, entreated his forgiveness for the Lord’s sake;—the presbyter continued obstinate.

In this situation of things the persecution of Valerian reached them suddenly. Sapricius was carried before the governor, and ordered to sacrifice in obedience to the edicts of the emperors. “We Christians,” replied Sapricius, “acknowledge for our King Jesus Christ, who is the true God, and the Creator of heaven and earth.—Perish idols, which can do neither good nor harm!” The Prefect tormented him a long time, and then commanded that he should be beheaded. Nicephorus, hearing of this, runs up to him, as he is led to execution, and renews in vain the same supplications. The executioners deride his humility as perfect folly. But he perseveres, and attends Sapricius

* Luke xiv. 12—15.

to the place of execution. There he says further, It is written, "Ask, and it shall be given you."—But, not even the mention of the word of God itself, so suitable to Sapphirus's own circumstances, could affect his obstinate and unforgiving temper.

Sapphirus, however, suddenly forsaken of God, recants, and promises to sacrifice. Nicephorus, amazed, exhorts him to the contrary, but in vain. He, then, says to the executioners, "I believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ whom he hath renounced." The officers return to give an account to the governor, who ordered Nicephorus to be beheaded.*

The account ends here:—but if Sapphirus lived to repent, as I hope he did, he might learn what a dangerous thing it is for a miserable mortal, whose sufficiency and perseverance rest entirely on Divine Grace, to despise, condemn, or exult over his brother. The last became the first:—and God showed his people wonderfully by this case, that he will support them in their sufferings for his name; but that, at the same time, he would have them to be humble, meek, and forgiving. This is the first instance I have seen of a man attempting to suffer for Christ on philosophical grounds:—and it failed: Self-sufficiency and pure Christianity are, in their nature, distinct and opposite:—Let no man attempt to unite or mix together such heterogeneous and jarring principles.

It appears that Christian fortitude is a very different thing from the steady pride of a philosopher, or the sullen patience of an Indian; and, that it cannot even subsist in the absence of Christian meekness and charity.—Philosophers and savages without the least supernatural help, have frequently maintained a hardy and uncomparable spirit. But, the event of this story may teach the infidel,—that he has no reason to exult in such instances,—that the spirit of suffering for Christ is, in its kind, a quite different thing,—that it is above mere human nature,—that it is wrought in the heart by divine grace,—and, that it cannot subsist if the Spirit of God be provoked to leave the sufferer.

Dionysius of Alexandria, whom Divine Providence had so remarkably preserved in the Decian persecution, lived to suffer much also in this—but not to death. Eu-

sebius has preserved some extracts of his writings, which not only prove this fact beyond dispute, but also throw considerable light on the effects of Valerian's persecution in Egypt.*

This bishop, with his presbyter Maximus, three deacons, and a Roman Christian, was brought before Æmilian the Prefect, and was ordered to recant: At the same time it was observed, that his doing so might have a good effect on others.—He answered, "We ought to obey God rather than man; I worship God, who alone ought to be worshipped." "Hear the clemency of the emperor," says Æmilian: "You are all pardoned, provided you return to a natural duty:—Adore the gods who guard the empire, and forsake those things which are contrary to nature." Dionysius answered, "All men do not worship the same gods, but men worship variously according to their sentiments. But we worship the One God, the maker of all things, who gave the empire to the most clement emperors Valerian and Gallienus; and to him we pour out incessant prayers for their prosperous administration." "What can be the meaning," says Æmilian, "why ye may not still adore that God of your's,—on supposition that he is a god—in conjunction with our gods?" Dionysius answered,—“We worship no other God.”

From this remarkable question of the Prefect, it is evident, that men might have been tolerated in the worship of Jesus, if they had allowed idolaters also to be right in the main, by associating idols with the true God. The firmness of Christians, in this respect, provoked their enemies. The dislike, at this day, of the pure Gospel of Christ, arises from a similar cause: Men are condemned as bigots, because they cannot allow the world at large to be right in the eyes of God.

Æmilian banished them all to a village near the desert, called Cephro. And thither Dionysius, though sickly, was constrained to depart immediately. "And truly," says Dionysius, "we are not absent from the church: for I still gather such as are in the city as if I were present:—absent indeed in body, but present in spirit. And there continued with us, in Cephro, a great congregation, partly of the brethren which followed us from Alexandria, and partly of them which came

* Fleury, Book 7. Acta sincera, 233, 234.

• Book 7. Chap. 2.

from Egypt. And there God opened a door to me to speak his word. Yet, at the beginning, we suffered persecution and were stoned: but at length, not a few of the Pagans forsook their idols and were converted. For, here, we had an opportunity to preach the word of God to a people who had never heard it before. And God, that brought us among them, removed us to another place, after our ministry was there completed. As soon as I heard that Æmilian had ordered us to depart from Cephro, I undertook my journey cheerfully, though I did not know whither we were to go; but, upon being informed that Colluthio was the place, I felt much distress; because it was reported to be a situation destitute of all the comforts of society, exposed to the tumults of travellers, and infested by thieves. My companions well remember the effect this had on my mind. I proclaim my own shame: At first I grieved immoderately. It was a consolation, however, that it was nigh to a city. I was in hopes from the nearness of the city, that we might enjoy the company of dear brethren; and that particular assemblies for divine worship might be established in the suburbs, which indeed came to pass."

Amidst this scantiness of information conveyed in no great perspicuity or beauty of style, it appears, however, that the Lord was with Dionysius, and caused his sufferings to tend to the furtherance of the Gospel.—His confession of his own heaviness of mind does honour to his ingenuousness: and the strength of Christ was made perfect in his weakness.

In another epistle, he gives a brief account of the afflictions of others.—It deserves to be transcribed as a monument of the greatness and the violence of Valerian's persecution,

"It may seem superfluous to recite the names of our people: for they were many, and to me unknown. Take this however for certain: There were men and women, young men and old men, virgins and old women, soldiers and vulgar persons, of all sorts and ages. Some, after stripes and fire, were crowned victors: some, immediately by the sword, and others, after a short but severe torture, became acceptable sacrifices to the Lord. You all heard how I, and Caius, and Faustus, and Peter, and Paul, when we were led bound by the centurion and his soldiers, were seized by certain men of Mareota, and drawn away by violence. I, and

Caius, and Peter, were separated from the other brethren, and were confined in a dreary part of Libya, distant three days journey from Paratonium."—Afterwards he says, "There hid themselves in the city some good men who visited the brethren secretly: Among these, Maximus, Dioscorus, Demetrius, and Lucius, were ministers. Two others of greater note, Faustus and Aquila, now wander, I know not where, in Egypt. All the deacons died of diseases, except Faustus, Eusebius, and Chereemon. God instructed Eusebius and strengthened him, from the beginning, to minister diligently to the confessors in prison; and to bury the bodies of the holy martyrs:—which, however, he could not do without great danger. The president, to this day, ceases not his cruelty, killing some instant, and tearing in pieces others by torments, or consuming them by bonds and imprisonments: He forbids any persons to come nigh them; and inquires daily whether his orders be obeyed.—Yet our God still refreshes the afflicted with consolation and with the attendance of the brethren."

This Eusebius,—here honourably mentioned,—was sometime after bishop of Laodicea in Syria; and Maximus the presbyter was successor to Dionysius in Alexandria. Faustus was reserved to the days of Dioclesian—again to suffer—even to blood.

At Cæsarea in Palestine, Priscus, Malcus, and Alexander, were devoured by wild beasts. These persons led an obscure life in the country; but hearing of the multitude of executions, they blamed themselves for their sloth; they came to Cæsarea; went to the judge, and obtained the object of their ambition.—Our divine Master, both by precept and example, condemns such forward zeal;—which however, in these instances, we trust, was not without a real love of his name.—We have seen abundantly how much like a true disciple of Christ, Cyprian of Carthage conducted himself in these respects.—In this same city, there likewise suffered a woman, who was said to be inclined to the heresy of Marcion; but, probably, there was not much ground for the report.

After three years employed in persecution, Valerian was taken prisoner by Sapor king of Persia, who detained him the rest of his life, and made use of his neck when he mounted his horse; and at length

Valerian
put to
death by
Sapor,
A. D. 260

commanded him to be flayed and salted. This event belongs rather to secular than Church-history: But as it is perfectly well attested, and as no one that I know of, except Mr. Gibbon, ever affected to disbelieve the fact, it cannot but strike the mind of any one who fears God.—Valerian had known and respected the Christians: His persecution must have been a sin against the light; and it is common with Divine Providence to punish such daring offences in a very exemplary manner.

After Valerian's captivity the Church was restored to rest. About the year two hundred and sixty-two, Gallienus, his son and successor, proved a sincere friend to the Christians, though, in other respects, no reputable emperor. By edicts he stopped the persecution; and he had the condescension to give the bishops his letters of licence to return to their pastoral charges. One of these letters, as preserved by Eusebius, runs thus:—"The emperor Caesar Gallienus, to Dionysius the bishop of Alexandria, and to Pinnus and Demetrius, with the rest of the bishops. The benefit of our favour we command to be published through the world: and I have, therefore, ordered every one to withdraw from such places as were devoted to religious uses; so that you may make use of the authority of my edict against any molestation; for I have, sometimes since, granted you my protection—wherefore, Cyrenius the governor of the province will observe the rescript which I have sent." He directed also another edict to certain bishops, by which he restored to them the places in which they buried their dead.

Were it useful at this day to refute the rash calumnies of Tacitus and of others against the Christians, one might appeal to these two edicts of Gallienus. It is impossible that either of them could have taken place, if it had not been undeniable, that the Christians, even to the time beyond the middle of the third century, were men of probity and worthy of the protection of government. As it is impossible to avoid this conclusion, the deepest stain rests on the characters of Trajan, Decius, and Valerian, men highly respected in secular history, for treating their subjects of the best characters with savage ferocity.—But God, who

has the hearts of all men in his hand, provided for his servants a protector in Gallienus, after an unexampled course of heavy persecution during the three last reigns.—Gallienus himself seems to have been more like a modern than an ancient sovereign;—a man of taste, indolence, and philosophy;—disposed to cherish every thing that looked like knowledge and liberty of thinking;—by no means so kind and generous in his constant practice as his profession might seem to promise;—the slave of his passions, and led away by every sudden feeling that seized his imagination. The Christians appear to have been considered by him as a sect of new philosophers; and as he judged it improper to persecute philosophers of any sort, they found a complete toleration under a prince, whose conscience seems to have been influenced by no religious attachment whatever.

CHAPTER XVII.

FROM THE REIGN OF GALLIENUS TO
THE END OF THE CENTURY.

THE general history of the Church of Christ, for the remaining forty years of this century, affords no great quantity of materials. After having collected them into this chapter in order, it may be proper to reserve, to a distinct consideration, the lives of some particular persons, and other miscellaneous matters, which belong not to the thread of the narrative.

We now behold a new scene:—Christians legally tolerated under a pagan government for forty years!—The example of Gallienus was followed by the successive emperors to the end of the century:—It was violated only in one instance;—the effect of which was presently dissipated by the hand of Providence.—This new scene did not prove favourable to the growth of grace and holiness. In no period since the Apostles was there ever so great a general decay as in this;—not even in particular instances, can we discover, during this interval, much of lively Christianity.

Those, however, are not well informed in the nature of the religion of Jesus, who suppose, that, literally, there was no persecution all this time:—True Christians are never without some share of it; nor is it in the power of the best and the mildest governments to protect men of godliness from the malice of the world in

all cases. We saw an example of this when Commodus was emperor:—Observe another under the government of Gallienus.—At Casarea in Palestine, there was a soldier—of bravery,—of noble family,—and of great opulence; who, upon a vacancy, was called to the office of centurion. His name was Marinus.—But, another soldier came before the tribunal, and urged—that, by the laws, Marinus was incapacitated, because he was a Christian, and did not sacrifice to the emperors;—and that he himself, as next in rank, ought to be preferred.—Achaus the governor asked Marinus what was his religion!—upon which he confessed himself a Christian. The governor gave him the space of three hours for deliberation.—Immediately Theotecnus, bishop of Casarea, called Marinus from the tribunal,—took him by the hand,—led him to the Church,—showed him the sword that hung by his side, and a New Testament which he pulled out of his pocket;—and he then bid him choose which of the two he liked best.—Marinus stretched out his hand, and took up the Holy Scriptures.—“Hold fast, then,” said Theotecnus; “Cleave to God: and him whom you have chosen, you shall enjoy: you shall be strengthened by him, and shall depart in peace.”—After the expiration of the three hours, upon the crier’s summons, he appeared at the bar, manfully confessed the faith of Christ, heard the sentence of condemnation, and was beheaded.

Without more acquaintance with the particular* institutes of Roman law on this subject, it is not easy to reconcile this proceeding with the edict of Gallienus.—Perhaps the act of Achaus was illegal,—or, perhaps, some particular MILITARY law might be in force against the martyr. The fact, however, rests on the best authority; and the profession of arms appears to have had still among them, since the days of Cornelius, those who loved Jesus Christ.

The greatest luminary in the Church at this time was Dionysius of Alexandria. His works are lost: A few extracts of them, preserved by Eusebius, have already been given;—and some few more may be here introduced.—He speaks of the Sabellian heresy, which had now made its appearance,—as follows:—

“As* many brethren have sent their books and disputations in writing to me, concerning the impious doctrine lately propagated at Pentapolis in Ptolemais, which contains many blasphemies against the Almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and also much infidelity respecting his only-begotten Son, the FIRST BEGOTTEN OF EVERY CREATURE, and THE WORD INCARNATE; and, lastly, much senseless ignorance relative to the Holy Ghost;—some of them I have transcribed, and sent the copies to you.”

This is the first account in existence of the origin of Sabellianism;—a plausible corruption, no doubt,—perhaps the most so of all those which oppose the mystery of the Trinity. But, like all the rest, it fails for want of Scripture-evidence, and shows itself to be only a weak attempt to lower and submit to human reason that, which was never meant to be amenable to its tribunal. The careful distinctions of Dionysius, in recounting the persons of the Trinity, were very proper in speaking of a heresy which confounds the persons, and leaves them nothing of those distinct characters, on which the nature of the doctrines of the Gospel so much depends.

This bishop also delivers his sentiments in the controversy concerning the re-baptizing of heretics: He is against that practice; and, at the same time, he condemns with great severity the Novatian schism;—because, says he, “it charges the most loving and merciful God with unmercifulness.”† Yet, on the subject of baptism, he confesses himself to have been, for some time at least, staggered in opinion by a remarkable case.—“When the brethren were gathered together, and when there was present one who had been, before my time, an ancient minister of the clergy, a certain person, allowed to be sound in the faith,—upon seeing our form and manner of baptism, and hearing the interrogatories and responses, came to me weeping and wailing, falling prostrate at my feet, and protesting—that the baptism which he had received was heretical,—could not be the true baptism,—and, that it had no agreement with that which was in use among us, but, on the contrary, was full of impiety and blasphemy. He owned, that the distress of his conscience was extreme,—that he durst not presume to

* Euseb. Book 7, Chap. 14.

* Book 7, Chap. 5. † Book 7, Chap. 7.

lift up his eyes to God, because he had been baptized with profane words and rites. He begged therefore to be re-baptized; with which request I durst not comply; but I told him that frequent communion, many times administered, would suffice. This man had heard thanksgiving sounded in the church, and had sung to it, 'Amen'; he had been present at the Lord's table; had stretched forth his hand to receive the holy food; had actually communicated; and, indeed for a long time, had been partaker of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;—therefore, I durst not re-baptize him, but bade him be of good cheer and of a sure faith, and boldly approach to the communion of saints.—Notwithstanding all this, the man mourns continually; and his horror keeps him from the Lord's table; and he scarcely, with much industry, can join in the prayers of the Church."

We have no farther account of this matter; but surely there is no good reason to believe that the God of Grace would, in due time, believe such a character.

The detestation of heresy, and the marked distinction of true Christianity were, in some circumstances, carried to an extreme, during this century; discipline, however, was not neglected in the Church; but, as I have already observed, was carried sometimes to excess,—even to excommunication.—Satan's temptations are ever ready to drive to despair truly penitent and contrite spirits. This story, as it respects all the parties concerned, breathes throughout a spirit the very opposite to the licentious boldness of our own times, and marks the peculiar character of the piety of the age of Diocletian;—which was sincere, but mixed with superstition.*

The celebration of the feast of Easter and of other holy days, forms the subject of another of Diocletian's epistles.

Diocletian, now returned from exile to Alexandria, found it involved in the horrors of a civil war. On the feast of Easter, as if he was still in banishment, he wrote to his people, who were in another part of the city, with which he could have no personal intercourse. In a letter to Hierax, an Egyptian bishop at some distance, he says, "It is not to be wondered at, that it is difficult for me to converse by epistles with those at a distance,

when I find myself here precluded from having any intercourse with my most intimate friends and tenderest connexions.—Even with THEM I have no intercourse but by writing, though they are citizens of the same Church; and I find it very difficult to procure a safe conveyance of any letters which I would send to them. A man may more easily travel from the east to the west than from Alexandria to Alexandria. The middle road of this city is more impassable than that vast wilderness which the Israelites wandered through in two generations."—He goes on to describe the miseries of war and bloodshed, of plagues and diseases, which, at that time, desolated Alexandria;—and he complains that the people still repented not of their sins.

To the brethren he says, "Now every thing is full of lamentation;—every one does nothing but mourn and howl through the city, because of the multitude of corpses and the daily deaths.—Many of our brethren, through their great love and brotherly affection, spared not themselves, but gave one to another, and attended upon the sick most diligently; and, in doing so, they brought the sorrows of others upon themselves; they caught the infection, and lost their own lives. In this manner the best of our brethren departed this life;—of whom some were presbyters, and some deacons,—highly revered by the common people." He then goes on to observe with what affectionate care the Christians attended the funerals of their friends, while the Pagans, in the same city, through fear of receiving the contagion, deserted and neglected theirs. Undoubtedly he describes here a strong picture of the benevolence of Christians, and of the selfishness of other men.—It belongs to true Christianity to produce such fruits, though, in some respects, they might be carried farther than real Christian prudence would vindicate.—But every lover of Jesus is refreshed to find the certain marks of his Spirit and his presence among his people.

An Egyptian bishop, named Nepos, taught that the Millennium was to come AFTER the resurrection; and described the happiness of saints as much consisting in corporeal enjoyments. Diocletian thought the notion dangerous;—yet, his candour inclined him to entertain a good opinion of Nepos on the whole. He commends his faith, his diligence, his skill in the Holy Scriptures; and, particularly,

* Euseb. Book 7, Chap. 8.—See Greek.

his agreeable psalmody, with which many of his brethren were delighted: But, as he thought his opinions not safe, he opposed them. When he was at Arsenoita, he spent three days with the brethren who had been infected with the notions of Nepos, and explained the subject. He speaks with much commendation of the candour and docility of the people, particularly of Coracion their leader, who owned himself brought over to the sentiments of Dionysius.—The authority of Dionysius seems to have quashed the opinions of Nepos in the bud.—The consequence of an injudicious and unscriptural view of the Millennium, thus rejected and refuted by a bishop of candour, judgment and authority, was,—that the doctrine itself, for ages, continued both much out of sight, and out of repute.—The learned reader need not be told, with how much clearer light it has been revived and confirmed in our days.

Dionysius finding how much use had been made of the Revelation of St. John in supporting the doctrine of the Millennium, gives his thoughts on that sublime and wonderful book: With much modesty he confesses, that though he revered its contents, he did not understand their scope.

The subtilty and the restless spirit of those, who corrupt the doctrine of the Trinity, have ever had this advantage,—that while they, without fear or scruple, can say what they please, its defenders are reduced to the necessity either of leaving the field to them entirely, or of exposing themselves to the specious charge of maintaining some human invention, or even heresy,—contrary to that which they are opposing. This last was the case of Dionysius in his attack on Sabellianism. The scantiness of our ideas, and the extreme difficulty of clothing, with proper expressions, those very inadequate ones which we have on a subject so profound, naturally lay us open to such imputation, from which, however, faithful zeal will never be disposed to shrink on a proper occasion;—I mean, the faithful zeal of those, who see through the designs of heretics, and who prefer truth, though veiled in an unavoidable mystery, to specious error disguised in an affected garb of simplicity.—Sabellius had taken pains to confound the persons of the Father and the Son. Dionysius showed, by an unequivocal testimony, that the Father was not the same as the Son, nor the Son the

same as the Father.—Dionysius, bishop of Rome, being informed of these things, assembled a council, in which certain expressions attributed to his namesake of Alexandria were disapproved; and he wrote to him with a view of furnishing an opportunity for explanation.

The bishop of Alexandria with great clearness, candour, and moderation, explained himself at large in a work which he entitled a Refutation and Apology.* In the small remains of this work, it appears that he held the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father: He describes the Trinity in Unity, and steers equally clear of the rock of Sabellianism, which confounds the persons, and that of Arianism, which divides the substance. His testimony, therefore, may be added to the uniform judgment of the primitive fathers on this subject.

“The Father,” says he, “cannot be separated from the Son, as he is the Father; for THAT NAME, at the same time, establishes the RELATION. Neither can the Son be separated from the Father; for the word Father implies the union: moreover, the Spirit is united with the Father and the Son, because it cannot exist separate either from HIM who sends it, or from HIM who brings it. Thus we understand the indivisible Unity without any diminution.” This account was satisfactory to the whole Church; and was allowed to contain the sense of Christians on the doctrine.

In the year two hundred and sixty-four, the heresy of Paul of Samosata began to excite the general attention of Christians; and, about the same time, a degeneracy both in principle and practice, hitherto very uncommon within the pale of Christianity, attracted the particular notice of all who wished well to the souls of men. Paul was the bishop of Antioch. It gives one no very high idea of the state of ecclesiastical discipline in that renowned Church, that such a man should ever have been placed at its head:—But it is no new thing for even sincere Christians to be dazzled with the parts and eloquence of corrupt men. The ideas of this man seem to have been perfectly secular. Zenobia of Palmyra, who, at that time, styled herself Queen of the East, and reigned over a large part of the empire which had been torn from the indolent

* Anth de Sent.—See Fleury, L. iv. Book 7.

hands of Gallienus, desired his instructions in Christianity.* It does not appear that her motives had anything in them beyond philosophical curiosity. The master and the scholar were well suited to each other; and Paul taught her his own conceptions of Jesus Christ,—namely, that he was, by nature, a common man like others. The irregularities of Paul's life, and the heterodoxy of his doctrines could no longer be endured. There is, in fact, more necessary connexion between principle and practice than the world is ready to believe; for pure practical holiness can only be the effect of Christian truth.—The bishops met at Antioch, to consider his case: Among these, were, particularly, Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia, Gregory† Thaumaturgus, and Athenodorus, who were brethren and bishops in Pontus; and Theoctenes of Caesarea in Palestine. A number of ministers and deacons besides met together on the occasion. In several sessions the case of Paul was argued. Firmilian seems to have presided.—Paul was induced to recant; and with such appearances of sincerity that Firmilian and the council believed him. The matter slept, therefore, for the present, and Paul continued in his bishopric.

It was in the same year two hundred and sixty-four, the eleventh of Gallienus, that Dionysius of Alexandria died, after having held the See seventeen years. He had been invited to the council; but pleaded in excuse his great age and infirmities: he, however, sent a letter to the council, containing his advice, and addressed the Church of Antioch, without taking any notice of her bishop. This was the last service of this great and good man to the Church of Christ, after having gone through a variety of hardships, and distinguished himself by his steady piety in the cause of religion. His having been a pupil of Origen in his younger years was no great advantage to his theological knowledge: It is to be regretted that our materials concerning him are so defective; but the few fragments which remain, afford the strongest marks of unquestionable good sense and moderation, as well as of genuine piety.

Gallienus having reigned about fifteen

years, Claudius succeeded; and, after a reign of two years, in which he continued the protector of Christians, Aurelian became emperor. Under him a second council was convened concerning Paul of Samosata. He dissembled egregiously; nevertheless, the intolerable corruption both of his doctrine and of his morals, was proved in a satisfactory manner; inasmuch that the servants of Christ felt themselves called upon to show openly, that all regard to the person and precepts of their divine Master was not lost in the Christian world.*—Seventy bishops appeared at the synod, among whom Theoctenes of Caesarea in Palestine was still one of the principal. They waited some time for the arrival of Firmilian of Cappadocia, who had been invited, and was on his way, notwithstanding his great age; but he died at Tarsus in the year two hundred and sixty-nine. He had been one of the greatest luminaries of the day, and so had Gregory Thaumaturgus of Pontus, who also died in the interval between the first and second council. The loss of these great men was, no doubt, the more severely felt on this occasion, because it was not in the power of every one, who really believed and loved the truth as it is in Jesus, to confute and expose, in a proper manner, the artifices of Paul.

Whoever has seen the pains taken at this day, by many persons of Paul's persuasion, to cover their ideas under a cloud of ambiguous expressions, and to represent themselves, when attacked, as meaning the same thing with real Christians, while, at other times, they take all possible pains, and in the most open way, to undermine the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, will not be surprised that Paul,—artful, eloquent, and deceitful as he was,—should be able to give a specious colour to his ideas. But, there was in the council a presbyter, named Malchion, who added to the soundness of Christian faith great skill in the art of reasoning: He had been, a long time, governor of the school of humanity at Antioch; and his talents and experience were of great service in this business:—He so pressed the ambiguous, equivocating Paul, that he compelled him to declare himself and to disclose his most secret meanings. There needed no more

* Athan. tom. 11. p. 357.—Fleury, Euseb. vii. Chap. 6, &c.

† See his Life in the next Chap.

* Athan. de Syn. Euseb. 23, &c.

to condemn him. All the bishops agreed to his deposition and exclusion from the Christian Church.—Malchion's disputation against Paul was preserved in writing to the time of Eusebius.

No fact in Church history is more certain than the deposition and exclusion of Paul;—and the inference is, thence, demonstratively clear,—that Socinianism in the year two hundred and sixty-nine, was not suffered to exist within the pale of the Christian Church.

Paul of
Samosata
deposed,
A. D. 269
or 270.

—I use that term, because it is now well understood; and because it fairly expresses the ideas of Paul. In truth;—no injury was done to the man: He had certainly no more right to Christian preferment than a traitor has to hold an office of trust under a legal government; and to oblige him to speak out what he really held, was no more than what justice required: Truth and openness are essential to the character of all teachers: He who is void of them, deserves to be without scholars or hearers. At the same time I cannot but further conclude,—that the doctrine, usually called Trinitarian, was universal in the Church in those times:—Dionysius, Firmilian, Gregory, Theotecnus, seventy bishops, the whole Christian world, were unanimous on this head;—and this unanimity may satisfactorily be traced up to the Apostles.

Paul being deposed, and a new bishop being chosen in his room, an epistle was dictated by the council and sent to Dionysius of Rome and to Maximus of Alexandria, and also dispersed through the Roman world, in which they explained their own labours in this matter,—the perverse duplicity of Paul,—and the objections against him.—The chief part of this will deserve to be transcribed—from Eusebius—as the most authentic account of the whole transaction.*

“To Dionysius and Maximus, and all our fellow bishops, elders, and deacons throughout the world, and to the whole universal Church,—Helenus, Hymeneus, Theophilus, Theotecnus, &c., with all the other bishops who with us inhabit and preside over the neighbouring cities and provinces;—together with the presbyters and deacons and holy Churches of God,—to the beloved brethren in the Lord, send greeting:—

“For the purpose of healing this deadly and poisonous mischief, we have called many bishops from far, as Dionysius of Alexandria, and Firmilian of Casarea in Cappadocia,—men blessed in the Lord;—the former of whom, writing hither to Antioch, vouchsafed not so much as once to salute the author of the heresy; for he wrote not specifically to him, but to the whole congregation;—the copy of which we have annexed. Firmilian came twice to Antioch, and condemned this novel doctrine.—He wished to have come the third time, for the same purpose; but he only reached Tarsus; and, while we were assembling, sending for him, and expecting his coming, he departed this life.—THIS MAN* was formerly indigent: He derived no property from his parents, nor acquired any either by a trade or a profession; yet he is grown exceedingly rich by sacrilegious practices and by extortions.—He deceived the brethren and imposed on their easiness: He entangled them in law suits: pretended to assist the injured; took bribes on all sides, and thus turned godliness into gain.—Vain, and fond of secular dignity, he preferred the name of JUDGE to that of Bishop: He erected for himself a tribunal and lofty throne, after the manner of civil magistrates, and not like a disciple of Christ.—He was accustomed to walk through the streets, with a numerous guard, in great state, receiving letters and dictating answers; inasmuch that great scandal has accrued to the faith through his pride and haughtiness. In church assemblies he used theatrical artifices, to amaze, surprise, and procure applause from weak people:—such as, striking his thigh with his hand, and stamping with his feet.—Then, if there were any, who did not applaud him, nor shake their handkerchiefs, nor make loud acclamations as is usual in the theatre,—nor leap up and down as his partizans do,—but behaved with decent and reverent attention as becomes the house of God, he reproved,—and even reviled such persons.—He openly, inveighed against the deceased expositors of Scripture in the most impudent and scornful terms; and magnified himself exactly in the manner of sophists and impostors. He suppressed the psalms made in honour of Jesus Christ, and called them modern compositions;—and he directed others to be sung in the

Church in his own commendation,—which very much shocked the hearers:—He also encouraged similar practices, as far as it was in his power, among the neighbouring bishops.—He refused to acknowledge the Son of God to have come down from heaven; and affirmed positively that he was of the EARTH.—These are not mere assertions, but all be proved by the public records of the Synod.—Moreover, this same man kept women in his house under the pretence of their being poor: His priests and deacons did the same; but he tolerated and concealed this and many other of their crimes, in order that they might remain in a state of dependence; and that, standing in fear on their own account, they might not dare to bring accusations against him for his wicked actions. He also frequently gave them money;—and in that way, he engaged covetous and worldly dispositions very strongly in his interest.—We are persuaded, brethren, that a bishop and all his clergy are bound to give the people an example of all good works; and we are not ignorant, that many, by the dangerous and evil custom of introducing single and unprotected women into their houses, have fallen into sin;—and how many, also, are subject to suspicion and slander on the same account. If, therefore, it should be admitted, that he hath committed no actual crime, yet the very suspicion arising from such a conduct ought to be guarded against, for fear of giving offence or setting a bad example to any. For how can he reprove another, or admonish another—not to converse frequently and privately with a woman,—and to take heed, as it is written, lest he fall,—**we who, though he has sent away one, still keeps two women in his house;—both of them handsome and in the flower of their age!** Besides, wherever he goes, he carries them about with him; and at the same time indulges himself in high living and luxuries.—On account of these things all sighed in secret indignation, but trembled at his power, and did not dare to accuse him.

* Doubtless he would deserve severe censures, even if he were our dearest friend, and perfectly orthodox in his sentiments;—but as he has renounced Christian mysteries,—We have felt ourselves under the necessity of expelling from the Church this contumacious adversary of God; we have, accordingly, placed in his room Domnus—a person adorned with all

the gifts required in a bishop: He is the son of Demetrian, of blessed memory—the predecessor of Paul.”

It is fashionable, at present, to despise all religious councils whatever: and probably, this contempt does not arise from an EXTRAORDINARY regard to religion itself. For, on all subjects, which are esteemed of moment and of general concern, common sense hath ever dictated to mankind the propriety and advantage of holding councils, by which the wisdom of THE MANY might be collected, concentrated and directed to beneficial purposes. Let the reader reflect, how much this has ever been the case in regard to politics, agriculture, commerce, and the fine arts.—Against religious councils, however moulded, or however conducted, the torrent of the present times, unquestionably, runs violent: And the mind of a historian is strongly tempted to give way to this torrent; for by so doing, he much more easily acquires a reputation for good sense and discernment, than by any exercises of learning, industry, or reflection, if these should lead him to oppose opinions, which happen to be prevalent. But it is, also, to be remembered, that a temporary reputation which neither consists with truth, nor with the deliberate judgment of the writer, is of very little value;—and with this sentiment in view, I venture to affirm, that religious councils ought not to be universally despised and rejected, because some of them have been useless or hurtful.—The council at Jerusalem* was intrinsically of more value than all the wealth and power of the Roman empire: It was by a council, also, that Cyprian was enabled to serve the Church substantially, though in one instance he failed: And, again, the council, which dictated the letter concerning Paul of Samosata, will deserve the thanks of the Church of Christ to the end of the world. Circumstanced as Paul was,—superior in artifice, eloquence, and capacity;—supported in civil power, and uncontrolled in his own diocese, nothing seemed so likely to weaken his influence and encourage the true disciples of Christ as the concurrent testimony of the Christian world assembled against him. And though it may be difficult for the insincere mildness of polite scepticism to relish the blunt tone of the council, there seem to me, in their proceedings, evident

* See the Acts of the Apostles.

marks of the fear of God, of Christian gravity, and of conscientious regard to truth. No doubt, the reports of Paul's actual lewdness must have been very common in Antioch;—but, for want of specific proof,—the hardest thing in the world to be obtained in such cases,—they check the smallest disposition to exaggerate: they assert no more than what they positively knew; and thus they convince posterity that they were, in no way, under the dominion of intemperate passion or resentment. This is the first instance of a Christian bishop having been proved so shamefully secular;—and that, on the most authentic evidence;—a grievous fact!—The mind is however considerably relieved by observing, that there existed at the same time a becoming zeal for truth and holiness.

Dionysius of Rome died, also, in the year 270. His successor Felix wrote an epistle to Maximus of Alexandria, in

Dionysius
of Rome
dies,
A. D. 270.

which,—probably on account of Paul's heresy,—he speaks thus:—"We believe that our Saviour Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary: we

believe that he himself is the eternal God and the Word, and not a mere man, whom God took into himself, in such a manner, as that the man should be distinct from him: For the Son of God is perfect God; and was also made perfect man, by being incarnate of the Virgin."

By the favour of Zenobia, Paul for the space of two or three years supported himself in the possession of the mother-church of Antioch, and of the episcopal house, and, of course, of so much of the revenues as depended not on voluntary contributions of the people. A party he, doubtless, had among the people; but the horror, which Socinianism then excited through the Christian world, as well as the flagitiousness of his life, render it impossible that he should have had, in general, the hearts of the Christians of Antioch. Zenobia was conquered by the emperor Aurelian, and then a change took place: The Christians complained; and Aurelian, considering Rome and Italy as, in all things, a guide to the rest of the world, ordered,—that the controversy should be decided according to the sentiments of the bishops. Of course Paul was fully and effectually expelled; and we hear no more of him in history.

Aurelian, hitherto, had been the friend of Christians: but pagan superstition and its abettors drove him at length into measures of persecution. The Christians were in full expectation of sanguinary treatment, when his death prevented his designs, in the year two hundred and seventy-five.

Aurelian
begins a
11th Per-
secution,
A. D. 272.
Aurelian
killed,
A. D. 275.

Tacitus, the successor of Aurelian, after a short reign, left the empire to Probus; in whose second year, and in the year of our Lord two hundred and seventy-seven, appeared the monstrous heresy of Manes, of which the fundamental principle was the admission of two first causes independent of each other, for the purpose of explaining the origin of evil. But I write not the history of heresies: That has been performed with sufficient accuracy by many, while we have very scanty information of the progress of TRUE RELIGION.—This heresy continued long to infest the Church; and necessity will oblige me hereafter, if this work be continued, to take notice of it more distinctly.

After Probus, Carus and his two sons, Dioclesian began to reign in the year two hundred and eighty-four. For the space of eighteen years this emperor was extremely indulgent to the Christians. His wife Prisca and his daughter Valeria were Christians, in some sense, secretly. The eunuchs of his palace and his most important officers were also Christians; and their wives and families openly professed the Gospel. Christians held honourable offices in various parts of the empire; innumerable crowds attended Christian worship: the old buildings could no longer receive them; and in all cities, wide and large edifices were erected.*

Dioclesian
reigns,
A. D. 284.

If Christ's kingdom had been of this world; and, if its strength and beauty were to be measured by secular prosperity, we should here fix the era of its greatness. But, on the contrary, the era of its actual declension must be dated in the pacific part of Dioclesian's reign. During this whole century the work of God, in purity and power, had been tending to decay: The connexion with philosophers was one of the principal causes: Outward peace and secular advantages

* Conc. Eph.—See Fleury, Book 8. chap. 4.

* Euseb. Book 8. Chap. 1.

completed the corruption: Ecclesiastical discipline, which had been too strict, was now relaxed exceedingly: bishops and people were in a state of malice: Endless quarrels were fomented among contending parties; and ambition and covetousness had, in general, gained the ascendancy in the Christian Church. Some there, doubtless, were, who mourned in secret, and strove in vain to stop the abundant torrent of the evil. The truth of this account seems much confirmed by the extreme dearth of real Christian excellencies after the death of Dionysius. For the space of thirty years, no one seems to have arisen like Cyprian, Firmilian, Gregory, or Dionysius:—No bishop or pastor, eminent for piety, zeal, and labour.—Eusebius, indeed, mentions the names and characters of several bishops; but he extols only their learning and philosophy, or their moral qualities. He speaks with all the ardour of affection concerning a minister in Casarea of Palestine, named Pamphilus,—but, in this case also, the best thing he asserts of him is, “that he suffered much persecution and was martyred at last.”—This event must have happened in the time of the persecution by Dioclesian, which begins just after the limits prescribed to this volume.—Notwithstanding this decline both of zeal and of principle;—notwithstanding this scarcity of evangelical graces and fruits, still Christian worship was constantly attended; and the number of nominal converts was increasing;—but the faith of Christ itself appeared now an ordinary business; and here TERMINATED, or nearly so, as far as appears, that great first Effusion of the Spirit of God, which began at the day of Pentecost. Human depravity collected throughout a general decay of godliness; and one generation of men equipped with very slender proofs of the spiritual presence of Christ with his Church.

The observation of Eusebius, who honestly confesses this declension, is judicious: “The heavy hand of God’s judgments began softly, by little and little, to visit us after his wonted manner. The persecution, which was raised against us, took place first among the Christians who were in military service; but, we were not at all moved with his hand, nor took any pains to return to God: We heaped sin upon sin, judging, like careless Epicureans, that God cared not for our sins, nor would ever visit us on ac-

count of them. And our pretended shepherds, laying aside the rule of godliness, practised among themselves contention and division.”—He goes on to observe,—that the “dreadful persecution of Dioclesian was then inflicted on the Church, as a just punishment and as the most proper chastisement for their iniquities.”

Toward the end of the century, while Dioclesian was practising the superstitious rites of divination, he became persuaded that the ill success of his attempts to pry into futurity, were owing to the presence of a Christian servant, who had made, on his forehead, the sign of the cross: and he immediately, in great anger, ordered not only those who were present, but all in his palace, to sacrifice to the gods, or, in case of refusal, to be scourged with whips.* He commanded also the officers of his armies to constrain all the soldiers to do the same, or to discharge the disobedient from the service. Eusebius alludes to this in the foregoing passage.—Christian truth, however, had not so universally decayed, but that many chose rather to resign their commissions, than to do violence to their consciences.—Very few were put to death on this account.—The story of Marcellus is remarkable.† Mr. Gibbon has undertaken to justify his execution, by representing him as punished purely for desertion and military disobedience. But, it is no unusual thing for this historian to suppress or to disguise facts, when the credit of religion is concerned: and I might have added this instance to the list of his perversions, which I formerly submitted to the judgment of the public.‡ The truth is, the death of Marcellus was the effect of a PARTIAL PERSECUTION: New military rules, subversive of Christianity, were introduced: Christian soldiers were ordered to sacrifice to the gods; and they could not do this without renouncing their religion:—Otherwise, it was, in those times, not uncommon for the followers of Jesus to serve in the armies.

It was in the year two hundred and ninety-eight, at Taugier in Mauritania, while every one was employed in feasting and sacrifices, that Marcellus the centurion took off his belt, threw down his vine-branch and his arms, and added, “I will not

Marcellus, called St. Mar-

* Lactantius, de morte persecut.

† Acta sincera, Fleury, Book 3. Chap. 27.

‡ See Milner’s Gibbon.

cellus, be- fight any longer under the headed, banner of your emperor, or A. D. 298. serve your gods of wood and stone. If the condition of a soldier be such that he is obliged to sacrifice to gods and emperors, I abandon the vine-branch and the belt, and quit the service." "We plainly see the cause," says Fleury, "that forced the Christians to desert:—They were compelled to partake of idolatrous worship." The centurion was ordered to be beheaded: And Cassianus, the register, whose business it was to take down the sentence, cried out aloud that he was shocked at its injustice. Marcellus smiled for joy, foreseeing that Cassianus would be his fellow-martyr: In fact, he was actually martyred about a month after.

When I first read Mr. Gibbon's account of this transaction, I concluded that Marcellus had suffered on mere principles of modern Quakerism.—Quite unnecessary are any further remarks, on a subject, which is not in the smallest degree obscure or uncertain.

These preliminaries to the persecution, with which the next century opens, did not, it seems, duly affect the minds of Christians in general; nor was the spirit of prayer stirred up among them; a certain sign of long and obstinate decay in godliness! There must have been, in secret, a lamentable departure from the lively faith of the Gospel. Origenism, and the learning and philosophy connected with it, were extremely fashionable: And we conjecture, that the sermons of Christian pastors had more, in general, of a merely moral and philosophical cast, than of any thing purely evangelical. In truth, justification by faith,—hearty conviction of sin,—and the Spirit's influences, are scarcely mentioned in all this season. Moral duties, I doubt not, were inculcated,—but professors of Christianity continued immoral and scandalous in their lives. The state of the Church of England from the time of Charles II. down to the middle of the last reign,—full of party faction and animosities, and love of the world, yet in its public ministrations adorned with learning, and abounding in external morality,—seems very much to resemble that of the Christian Church in manners and in piety, from the death of Dionysius to the end of the century.—In one instance there was a great difference: Superstition was much stronger in the ancient Church; but as it was enlisted in the service of self-right-

eousness, and as the faith of Christ and the love of God was, in a great measure, buried under it, such a diversity does not affect the general likeness.

God, who had exercised long patience, declared at length in the course of his providence, "Because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused MY FURY TO REST UPON THEE."

But this scene, which introduces quite a new face on the Church, and was quickly followed by several surprising revolutions, belongs to the next century.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOME ACCOUNT OF GREGORY THAUMATURGUS, THEOGNOSTUS, AND DIONYSIUS OF ROME.

THESE three persons are all, whom I can find belonging to the third century, to whom, according to my plan, sufficient justice has not been done already. Of the two last, indeed, I have little to say. Of the first more is recorded. Eusebius† has given a short account of him; and his life is written at length, by Gregory of Nyssen. Cave and Fleury have collected the most material things concerning him; but the former is more to be depended on.—I wish to furnish the reader with every information that may appear valuable concerning this great man: I wish to separate truth from fiction. Considerable allowance, no doubt, must be made for the growth of superstitious credulity:—I dare not, however, reject all that part of Gregory's narrative, in which miraculous powers are ascribed to Thaumaturgus.—His very name‡ admonishes the historian to be cautious in this matter: and though no great stress, perhaps, ought to be laid on such a circumstance alone, it behooves us to remember that the same idea is supported by the concurrent testimony of antiquity.

He was born at Neocæsarea, the metropolis of Cappadocia. His father, zealous for paganism, took care to educate him in idolatry, and in the learning of the Gentile world.—He died when his son was only fourteen years of age.—The mother of Thaumaturgus took care, however, to complete his education and that

• Ezek. xxiv. 13. † Book 6. Chap. 29.

‡ Wonderworker.

of his brother Athenodorus, who was afterwards a Christian bishop, as well as himself.—He travelled to Alexandria to learn the Platonic philosophy, where he was equally remarkable for strictness of life and for close attention to his studies. The renowned Origen, at that time, gave lectures in religion and philosophy, at Cesarea in Palestine. Thaumaturgus, his brother Athenodorus, and Firmilian, a Cappadocian gentleman, with whom he had contracted an intimate friendship, put themselves under his tuition. This same Firmilian is the Cappadocian bishop, whom we have, repeatedly, had occasion to mention. The two brothers continued five years with Origen, and were persuaded by him to study the holy Scriptures; and no doubt is to be made, but that the most assiduous pains were exerted by that zealous teacher to ground them in the belief of Christianity.—On his departure he delivered an eloquent speech in praise of Origen, before a numerous auditory,—a testimony at once of his gratitude and of his powers of rhetoric.

There is still extant a letter written by Origen to Gregory Thaumaturgus,* in which he exhorts him to apply his knowledge to the promotion of Christianity. The best thing in it is, that he advises him to play fervently and seriously for the dissemination of the Holy Spirit.

Being now returned to Neocæsarea, he gave himself much to prayer and retirement; and, doubtless, was, in secret, prepared and disciplined for the important work to which he was soon after called. Neocæsarea was a large and populous city,—full of idolatry,—the very seat of Satan; so that Christianity could scarcely gain any entrance into it. Phœdimus, bishop of Amasea, a neighbouring city, was grieved to see its profaneness; and hoping much from the piety and capacity of young Gregory, he took pains to engage him there in the work of the ministry. Gregory, from pure modesty, endeavoured to elude his designs; but was at length prevailed on to accept the charge.

The scene was arduous. He had a Church to found, before he could govern it. There were not above seventeen professors of Christianity in the place. His name-sake of Nyssa seems to have been imposed on by the superstitious spirit, then too prevalent, when he tells us that

Gregory Thaumaturgus received, in a vision, a creed from John the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary. But, as he assures us, that the original, written with his own hand, was preserved in the Church of Neocæsarea in his time; and,—as this is a matter of fact of which any person might judge;—as the creed itself contains nothing but what is very agreeable to the language of the fathers of the third century;—and, as we have already seen the exact and steady pains with which they guarded the doctrine of the Trinity against heresies,—I do not hesitate to conclude that he either actually composed the creed in question, or received it as his own;—at the same time the intelligent reader, when he has considered its contents, and the consequences deducible from them, need not be in the least surprised at the industry* with which, in our times, its credit has been impeached. The whole creed is as fellows, and merits our attention the more,—because the orthodoxy of Gregory has been unreasonably suspected against the express testimony of Eusebius,—who, we have seen above,—represents him as one of the opposers of Paul of Samosata, at the first council.

“There is one God.—The Father of the living Word, of the subsisting wisdom and power, and of HIM, who is his eternal express Image: The perfect Father of Him that is perfect: The Father of the only-begotten Son. There is One Lord, the only Son of the only Father; God of God; the Character and Image of the Godhead; the energetic Word; the comprehensive Wisdom by which all things were made; and the Power that gave Being to all creation: The true Son of the true Father: The Invisible of the Invisible: The Incorruptible of the Incorruptible: The Immortal of the Immortal: The Eternal of the Eternal. There is one Holy Ghost, having his subsistence of God; who was manifested through the Son to men: The perfect Image of the perfect Son: The Life, and the Source of Life: The Holy Fountain: Sanctity, and the Author of Sanctification; by whom is made manifest God the Father, who is above all and in all, and God the Son, who is through all. A perfect Trinity, which, neither in Glory, Eternity, or Dominion, is separated or divided.”

Notwithstanding the prejudices, which

* Origen Philocal. C. 13.

* See Lardner's Credibility.

his idolatrous countrymen must have had against him, he was received by Musonius, a person of consequence in the city; and, in a very little time, his preaching was so successful that he was attended by a numerous congregation. The situation of Gregory, so like that of the primitive Christian preachers, in the midst of idolatry, renders it exceedingly probable that he was, as they were, favoured with miraculous gifts: for THESE the Lord bestowed in abundance, where the name of Jesus had as yet gained no admission; and it is certain that miracles had not then ceased in the Church.

Gregory Nyssen himself lived within less than a hundred years after Gregory Thaumaturgus; and both he and his brother,—the famous Basil,—speak of his miracles without the least doubt. Their aged grandmother, Macrina, who taught them in their youth, had, in her younger years, been a hearer of Gregory. Basil particularly observes, that she told them the very words which she had heard from him; and assures us that the Gentiles, on account of the miracles which he performed, used to call him a second Moses. The existence of his miraculous powers, with reasonable persons, seems then unquestionable. It is only to be regretted that the few particular instances which have come down to us are not the best chosen:—but, that he cured the sick,—healed the diseased,—and expelled devils; and,—that thus God wrought by him for the good of souls, and paved the way for the propagation of the Gospel,—as it is, in itself, very credible, so has it the testimony of men worthy to be believed.

Gregory continued successfully employed at Neocæsarea till the persecution of Decius. Swords and axes, fire, wild beasts, stakes, and engines for distending the limbs, iron chairs made red-hot, frames of timber set up straight, in which the bodies of the tortured were racked with nails that tore off the flesh; these, and a variety of other inventions, were used.—But the Decian persecution, in general, was before described.—Pontus and Cappadocia seem to have had their full share. Near relatives, in the most unnatural manner, betrayed one another: the woods were full of vagabonds: the towns were empty: the public prisons were found too small; and the private houses, deprived of their Christian inhabitants, became gaols for the reception of prisoners.

In this terrible situation of things, Gregory considered, that his new converts could scarcely be strong enough to stand their ground and be faithful: He, therefore, advised them to flee; and he encouraged them to that step by his example. Many of his people endured much affliction, but God restored them at length to peace: Their bishop returned again, and refreshed and exhilarated their minds with his pastoral labours.

In the reign of Gallienus, the Christians suffered extremely from the ravages of barbarous nations, which gave occasion to Gregory's Canonical Epistle, still extant,—in which, rules of a wholesome, penitential, and disciplinarian nature are delivered.

The last service which is recorded of him, is the part which he took in the first council concerning Paul of Samosata. He died not long after. A little before his death he made a strict inquiry, whether there were any persons in the city and neighbourhood still strangers to Christianity: And being told there were about seventeen in all, he sighed; and, lifting up his eyes to heaven, appealed to God, how much it troubled him that ANY of his fellow-townsmen should still remain unacquainted with salvation: At the same time he expressed great thankfulness,—that, whereas at first, he had found only seventeen Christians, he should now only leave that same number of idolaters.—Having prayed for the conversion of infidels and for the edification of the faithful, he peaceably gave up his soul to the Almighty.

He was an evangelical man, says Basil, in his whole life: In his devotion he showed the greatest reverence: YES and NO—were the usual measures of his communication.—How desirable is it that those who profess to love Jesus, should uniformly practise the same! He never allowed himself to call his brother fool: No anger or bitterness proceeded out of his mouth: Slander and calumny, as directly opposite to Christianity, he peculiarly hated and avoided. Lies and falsehood, envy and pride, he abhorred. He was zealous against all corruptions; and Sabellianism, which long after, in Basil's time, reared up its head, was silenced by the remembrance of what he had taught and left among them.—So Basil tells us.

On the whole, the reader will with me regret, that antiquity has left us such

scanty memorials of a man so much honoured of God, so eminently holy, and so little inferior, in utility among mankind, to any, with which the Church of Christ was blessed, from the Apostles' days to his own times. For it is not to be conceived, that so great and almost universal a change in the religious profession of the citizens of Neocæsarea could have taken place without a marvellous effusion of the Holy Spirit in that place. And how instructive and edifying would the narrative be, if we were distinctly informed of its rise and progress! Certainly,—the essentials of the Gospel must have been preached in much clearness and purity. In no particular instance was the Divine influence ever more apparent since the apostolic age.

It is not easy to fix with precision, the time when Theognostus of Alexandria lived; though it is certain that he is later than Origen; and, that he must belong to the third century. He platonizes, after the manner of Origen, in some parts of his writings; yet, he is cited by Athanasius as a witness of the Son's consubstantiality with the Father. "For, as the Son is not diminished," says he, "though it produces rays continually, so likewise the Father is not diminished in begetting the Son, who is his image." It is certain that this is Trinitarian language; and, though neither Theognostus nor Gregory, nor some others of the ancient fathers, spoke always of the Persons of the blessed Trinity, with so much exactness as afterwards was done, it would be an extreme want of candour to rank them with Arians, Sabellians, or the like, when there is the clearest proof that the foundation of their doctrine was really Trinitarian. Before this important article of faith had been contradicted, men did not perceive the necessity of being constantly on their guard respecting it: but when the heresies were formed, they felt themselves, urgently, called upon to express themselves with the most diligent precision. The want of attending to this just distinction has nursed several unreasonable cavils in the minds of those who eagerly catch at every straw to support heretical notions.—Nothing is known of the life of Theognostus.—The proofs of his eloquence and capacity are clear and strong.*

The injustice of the late attempts made

to invalidate the evidences of the antiquity and of the uninterrupted preservation of the doctrine of the Trinity within the three first centuries, requires me to mention one instance more, which, added to the many already mentioned, will, I think, authorize me to draw this conclusion,—that during the first three hundred years after Christ, though the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity was variously opposed, yet the whole Christian Church constantly united in preserving and maintaining it, even from the Apostles' days, as the proper sphere, within which all the truth, and holiness, and consolation of genuine Christianity lie; and, one may defy its boldest enemies to produce a single instance of any real progress in Christian piety, made in any place, where this doctrine was excluded.

We have before observed, that Dionysius of Alexandria, through his zeal against the sentiments of Sabellius, became suspected of Arianism; and, that he fully exculpated himself. A Roman synod had been convened on that account; and Dionysius of Rome,* in the name of the Synod, wrote a letter, in which he proves, that the Word was not created, but begotten of the Father from all eternity; and distinctly explains the mystery of the Trinity. Such extreme nicety of caution in steering clear of two rocks like those of Sabellianism and Arianism, between which, it must be confessed, the passage is narrow and straight, demonstrates,—that the true doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, which, with so much clearness, as to the existence of the thing itself, though, necessarily, with perfect obscurity as to the MANNER of the existence, discovers itself every where in the Scriptures, was even then understood with precision, and maintained with firmness throughout the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS CENTURY.

THE power of real Christianity is always the strongest and the clearest in its beginnings or in its revivals.—Exactly contrary to the process in secular arts and sciences, the improvements of following ages, unless they be favoured with

* Du Pin, 3d Century.

* Du Pin, 3d Cent.

fresh effusions of the Holy Spirit, are, in reality, so many depravations of what was excellent in its infancy. For these reasons, the object of this chapter would fall exactly within the design of the author of this History; and it would be a great satisfaction to his mind, to be able to explain, AT LARGE, the extension of the Gospel in the third century.—But we must be content with such materials as we have; and let the reader supply, from his own meditations, as much as he can, whatever he may think defective in the following scanty account.

In the reign of Decius, and in the midst of his persecution, about the year two hundred and fifty, the Gospel, which

had hitherto been chiefly confined to the neighbourhood of Lyons and Vienne, was considerably extended in France. A. D. 250.

Saturninus was the first bishop of Toulouse, and at the same time several other Churches were founded:—as at Tours, Arles, Narbonne, and Paris. The bishops of Toulouse and Paris afterwards suffered for the faith of Christ; but they left Churches, in all probability, very flourishing in piety.* And France, in general, was blessed with the light of salvation.

Germany was also, in the course of this century, favoured with the same blessing, especially those parts of it which are in the neighbourhood of Franco. Cologne, Treves, and Metz, particularly, were evangelized.†

Of the British Isles little is recorded; and that little is obscure and uncertain: It is rather from the natural course of things and from analogy, than from any positive unexceptionable testimony, that we are induced to conclude that the Divine Light must have penetrated into our country.

During the miserable confusions of this century, some teachers from Asia went to preach the Gospel among the Goths who were settled in Thrace. Their holy lives and miraculous powers were much respected by these barbarians; and, many of them, from a state perfectly savage, were brought into the light and comfort of Christianity.‡

The wisdom and goodness of God so

ordered events, that the temporal miseries, which afflicted mankind in the reign of Gallienus, were made subservient to the eternal interests of his cruel, blind, and infatuated creatures. The barbarians, who ravaged Asia, carried away with them into captivity several bishops, who healed diseases, expelled evil spirits in the name of Christ, and preached Christianity.—They were heard, in some places, with respect and attention; and became the instruments of the conversion of numbers.* That is all that I can collect of the extension of the Gospel among the barbarian ravagers.

CHAPTER XX.

A SHORT VIEW OF THE EXTERNAL STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THE THIRD CENTURY.

It is the duty of Christians to shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a CROOKED AND PERVERSE NATION. That this was actually the case, even in the third century,—though much less so than in the two former, and toward the latter end of it with a very rapid diminution of the glorious brightness of the Gospel,—the course of the foregoing narrative has, I trust, made apparent.

Those, with whom the real condition of the rest of mankind in those times, is familiar, will see this in the strongest light. For three centuries, luxury, attended by every abominable vice that can be conceived, had been increasing in the Roman empire. There want not lamentable proofs that the severe satires of Juvenal were but too well founded. ALL FLESH HAD CORRUPTED THEIR WAY. With the loss of civil liberty, even the old Roman virtues, of public spirit and magnanimity,—though no better, as Augustine says, than splendid sins in their nature,—had vanished. Civil broils and distractions continually prevailed for the greatest part of this period, and increased the quantity of vice and misery. The best time was, doubtless, during the reigns of Trajan, Adrian, and the Antonines: But, even under those princes, the standard of virtue was extremely low. The most scandalous and unnatural vices were practised without remorse. Men of rank either lived atheistically, or were sunk

* Book I. Greg. Tours, France, C. 30. Fleury, 13. B. 6.

† See Mosh. 3d Century.

‡ Sozomen, B. 13. 11.

* Sozomen, B. 2. C. 5.

in the deepest superstition. The vulgar were perfectly ignorant: The rich domineered over the poor, and wallowed in immense opulence; while the provinces groaned under their tyranny: Philosophers, with incessant loquacity, amused their scholars with harangues concerning virtue,—but they neither practised it themselves, nor understood its real nature: By far the largest part of mankind,—namely, the slaves and the poor, were in remediless indigence: No methods whatever were devised for their convenience or relief: In the mean time, the pleasurable amusements of men—as the stage and the amphitheatre,—were full of obscenity, savageness, and cruelty.

This was the Roman world. We know much less of the rest of the globe: which, however, in ferocious wickedness and ignorance, was sunk much deeper than the nations that bowed under the yoke of the Cæsars.

Behold!—In the midst of all this chaos, this corruption, and this ignorance, arose out of Judea a light of doctrine and of practice singularly distinct from any thing that was then in existence!—A number of persons,—chiefly of low life,—the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, live as men ought to do,—with a proper contempt of this vain life,—with the sincerest and most steady ambition for another: They prove themselves to be true philosophers, if real love of wisdom be allowed to consist in the justest views and worship of their Maker, and in actual acquaintance with his character,—in real moderation of their passions and desires,—and in unforgotten benevolence to all mankind, even to their enemies.

No sound rules of philosophizing will direct us to conclude all this to have been of man.—The work was of God: and this effusion of his Holy Spirit lasted for three centuries, delayed indeed toward the end of that period, but not entirely extinguished.

It was necessary, that this people,—diverse from all others,—the followers of the same Jesus of Nazareth,—should have among themselves some external order,—or, in other words, some ecclesiastical government.—An endless maze of controversy presents itself here; nor does there appear to be any certain divine rule on this subject. Men may serve God acceptably under very different modes of Church-government; and, in point of fact, these modes were different

in different places during the primitive ages of Christianity. This variety, however, does not appear to have been either so great, or so extreme, as to have excluded all general principles in the regulation of the external Church: History enables us to discover,—at least the rude outlines of a usual,—of a prevailing PRACTICE,—which materially differed from most, if not from all the ecclesiastical forms of government, which now exist in the Christian world.

The Apostles, who were the first teachers, and, who planted the first Churches, ordained successors,—as far as appears,—without any consultation of the respective flocks over which they were about to preside. But, as it was neither reasonable nor probable that any set of persons after them should be regarded as their equals, this method of appointing ecclesiastical rulers did not continue;—and, undoubtedly, the election of bishops devolved on the people.* Their appearance to vote on these occasions, their constraining of persons sometimes to accept the office against their will, and the determination of Pope Leo, long after, against forcing a bishop on a people against their consent, demonstrate this. The characters of men to be elected to this office were very strictly examined. Public notice was given, that any one might inform against them, if they were vicious and immoral. The decision on their MORAL CONDUCT was left to the people;—that on their DOCTRINE belonged chiefly to the bishops who ordained them. For the power of ordination belonged properly to bishops alone, though presbyters—a second order of men, who appear to me all along distinct from them,—concurred with them and with the body of the people. The same power of electing, was, in some degree and in some instances, exercised by the people in the appointment of these very presbyters; but the case is by no means so uniformly clear: and, in filling up the lower offices of the Church the bishop acted still more according to his discretion.

The use of deacons, the third order in the Church, is well known. These three orders obtained very early in the primitive Churches. The epistles of Ignatius,—I build on those parts only that are undoubtedly genuine,—demonstrate this:

* R. Bingham, Book 4. Chap. 11. Antiquities.—Du Pin, end of third Century.

and, in general, the distinction of these offices was admitted through the Christian world.

Yet, if a Christian people were grown very heretical, the bishops thought themselves bound in duty to provide for the instruction of the smaller number, who, in their judgment, loved the truth as it is in Jesus; and for this peculiar service they were accustomed both to elect and consecrate a bishop. Likewise in sending missionaries to the barbarous nations, it would be absurd to suppose that they waited for the choice of the people.—They deputed and ordained whom they approved of for that end.

Besides those, which have been mentioned, there appear, in the third century, a number of lower officers, as doorkeepers, sub-deacons, acolyths or attendants, who, by degrees, had grown up in the Christian Church. A much more candid and true account of them may be given, than what has been imposed on us, with sufficient malignity. It could not be to administer to the pride and sloth of the higher clergy, that such offices were instituted. Christians increased in number, and more labourers were required: Besides, as they had not then any seminaries of learning, the serving of the Church in these lower offices was made an introductory step to the higher ones. And this was their most important use.*

The authority of the bishop was by no means unlimited;—but it was very great. Nothing could be done in the Church without his consent. The extent of his diocese was called *παρoικια*. Some of these dioceses had a greater, others a less number of Churches which belonged to them. The diocese of Rome, before the end of the third century, had above forty Churches,—as Optatus observes;—and this agrees very well with the account before stated, namely,—that under Cornelius the bishop, there were forty-six priests.†—Cornelius, according to the usual practice in those times, must, himself, have ministered—particularly at the chief or mother-church: and the priests of course, must have taken care of the other Churches. But, distinct parishes, with presbyters allotted to them, were not yet known in cities.‡—It appears that the

bishop sent them successively to minister according to his discretion. The neighbouring villages, however, which were annexed to bishoprics, could not be supplied in that manner: And they had,—even then,—several parish priests,—who acted under the authority of the bishop.

That bishops were not merely congregational pastors, seems evident from the nature of things, as well as from the concurrent testimony of all antiquity. There were seven bishops who belonged to the seven churches of Asia, called Angels in the Book of the Revelation. It is absurd to suppose that the great Church of Ephesus, in the decline of St. John's life, should be only a single congregation; and, most probably, the same is true of all the rest. Supposing the Christian brethren to consist of only five hundred men; these, with their families and servants, and occasional hearers, would make an assembly large enough for any human voice. But, it is more probable that the number of Christians at Ephesus amounted to many thousands. This was the case at Jerusalem.* And, in Chrysostom's time, the Church of Antioch consisted of a hundred thousand. Perhaps it might comprise half that number in the latter end of the third century.—Nevertheless, it is still certain, that dioceses were then much smaller than in after times: and the vast extension of them proved very inconvenient to the cause of godliness. Archbishop Cranmer wished to correct this evil in our national Church: and he wanted neither zeal nor judgment. But that and many other good things slept with the English Reformers.

The choice of bishops, and—in part at least—of presbyters, by the people, is a custom which seems to have grown naturally out of the circumstances of the Church at that time. The first bishops and presbyters were appointed by the Apostles themselves;† nor could I ever discover the least vestige in Scripture of their appointment by the people. There was not a sufficient judgment in any of them for this trust; the world being, at that time, Pagan or Jewish, or at least, infant in Christianity. Apostolical wisdom and authority, under God, supplied the want in the next succession of bishops. As the judgment of the people matured, and, especially, as the grace of God was powerful among them, they were

* Bing. Book 3. Chap. 1.—Calv. Institutes, Book the last.

† See Chap. IX. of this volume—towards the end.

‡ Bing. Book 9. Chap. 8.

* Acts xxi. 20.

† Acts xiv. 23.

rendered better qualified to be the electors of their ecclesiastical governors. Precedents, not Scriptural indeed, but of very high antiquity, were set; and the practice continued during at least the three first centuries. On the other hand I do not find that the people had any power in deposing a bishop: The cognizance of the crimes of bishops was left to a council or synod of neighbouring bishops and presbyters; and in that, as well as all material affairs which concerned the Church in general, the authority of such councils was held very great, from early times; nor does it appear that the Christian laity had any direction in them.—The well-authenticated case of Paul of Samosata is very instructive here.

In furnishing this rough sketch of primitive ecclesiastical government, I would be understood, neither to provoke nor to invite any controversy on this contentious subject. I have given my own sentiments,—but, at the same time, I confess that I feel no surprise that controversies should have been started in a matter, where something may be said—for episcopacy,—for presbytery,—and for independency. To me it seems an unhappy project, to look on any one of the forms as of DIVINE RIGHT, or of Scriptural authority.—Circumstances will make different modes more proper, in one place, and at one time, than at another.—And, whoever rests in this conclusion, will be in no danger of bigotry,—but, on the contrary, will see much reason for moderation and latitudinarian indifference in judging of various methods, which have been proposed or made use of for the external regulation of the Church.—Let zeal be employed by all sincere Christians in what is really divine and scriptural;—in what is internal, and truly essential to the immortal interests of mankind.—The arguments for the three forms of Church-government, as supported by experience, may be briefly stated thus:—In no one instance does the independent plan appear to have a solid foundation either in Scripture or antiquity; yet, the interference of the people, and the share of authority exercised by them,—though never on the plan of independent congregations,—gives some plausible colour to independency. The presbyterian system seems to be scriptural and primitive, so far as the institution of the clergy is concerned, but defective for want of a bishop. The episcopal form, no doubt,

obtained in all the primitive Churches without exception; but—what effectually checks the pride of those who are fond of the pomp of hierarchy,—it must be confessed, that ANCIENT episcopacy had no secular mixtures and appendages: and, further, the pastoral character of bishops, together with the smallness of their dioceses, always adapted to pastoral inspection, made them more similar to the presbyterian hierarchy.—When facts are actually balanced in this way, or nearly so, though violent party or prejudice may lead men to view even historical evidence in opposite lights; nevertheless, men of cool and sedate judgment will not differ much in their opinions.

The discipline of the primitive Church was very strict; it even degenerated, as has been observed, into excessive severity. A clergyman once deposed for flagitiousness, was never restored to his order. This might be right.—Another custom, which prevailed at length, cannot be vindicated. A person once ejected for his vices from the Church might be restored;—on a relapse, being again ejected, he could never be favoured with Church-communion,—though by no means supposed to be necessarily excluded from the mercy of God in Christ.—Their jealous care against heresies has been abundantly shown; and their zeal against viciousness of practice was equal to this. Suppose it be allowed, that this zeal was carried to too great a length; and, even, that it was mixed with superstition; yet,—in comparison of the licentiousness of our times,—how beautiful does it appear!—and how demonstrative of the power and reality of godliness among them!

Christian assemblies were then frequented with great constancy, and the Eucharist was generally administered whenever they met for public worship. But still greater proofs of their superior regard to God and to every thing that is really good, remain yet to be mentioned.

Their liberality to the indigent was wonderful: there was nothing like it at that time in the world. The Jews were a very selfish, hard-hearted people: the Gentiles lived in luxury and splendour, if they could;—but, care for the poor seems to have made no part of their jurisprudence, nor to have been at all a fashionable virtue. I never could learn that philosophers, though they harangued

incessantly concerning virtue, either much recommended, or practised any kindness to the bulk of mankind,—that is, the slaves and the vulgar. Indeed their precepts are particularly directed to the higher ranks, and they seem to forget that the lower orders belonged to the human species. A hospital, an almshouse, or any similar provision for the poor, was unknown in the pagan and philosophic world. But, when the religion of JESUS, who is no respecter of persons, began to gain ground, the barbarous spirit of aristocracy lost its dominion among Christians, though it still prevailed in the manners of the rest of mankind. Christians felt themselves ALL sinners: ALL, in the sight of God, on a level.—Thus the Christian master, though bound to preserve a due subordination of ranks, and whatever is wholesome in government, considered his slave as his equal in the sight of God, and as redeemed by the same atoning blood of his Saviour. The pride of birth, station, and quality, was crushed: The obedient disciple of Christ, followed the example of his compassionate Lord, and made it his business to relieve the miserable.—We have seen above a thousand and fifty widows and impotent persons maintained by the liberality of the Roman Church under Cornelius; we have seen also the active charity of the archdeacon Laurentius, in finding out and assisting miserable objects, punished with a fiery death: The very spirit and taste of Christians, with the frugality and simplicity of their lives and manners, enabled them abundantly to help the necessitous; while the rest of the world persecuted them, and while philosophers themselves, dependent on the great, and despising the poor, vainly babbled against them.

“O God of all grace, whose tender mercies are over all thy works,—THIS must be thy religion,—which humbled and sweetened the hearts of men, which taught them practically to regard all men as brethren, and to delight in doing good to all without distinction of persons!”—The pagans themselves admired this brotherly love.

But the most singularly striking characteristic of this people has not yet been noticed.—Though they had a regular polity, guarded by great strictness of discipline, distinguished into a number of communities, each administered by a bishop, presbyters, and deacons; and concen-

trated by general councils held from time to time; they neither had, nor strove to obtain the least secular support of any kind. They lay exposed to the rage of the whole world around them, incited by its natural enmity against God and by the love of sin; and exasperated on finding itself condemned by these upstarts as deservedly obnoxious to the Divine displeasure. The whole Roman world comprehended thousands of discordant sects and parties,—which all tolerated one another, because all agreed to treat sin with lenity, and to allow one another's religion to be right. It was impossible for Christians to do this: Hence the spirit of persecution was excited; and, whoever at this day lives in the same sincere hostility against all sin, and in the exercise of the same charity, patience, and heavenly-mindedness as they did, will undesignedly, yet assuredly, excite, in a similar manner, the displeasure of the rest of mankind.—Now, it is very easy to understand, how precarious, on this account, their situation in society must have been! —They had not the least legal or secular aid against persecution. Obligated, like the rest of the subjects of the Roman empire, to contribute to the general defence, and to serve in the Roman armies, when called on, they had no civil privileges:—If an emperor chose to persecute them, they were perfectly defenceless; they had no political resource against oppression.

What could be the reason of this? Shall we say, “their circumstances, during the first three hundred years, were too low, and their means too weak, to encourage them to attempt resistance or innovation of any kind?”—This has been said—inconsiderately, it should seem—by those who are not willing to allow that their passiveness under injuries proceeded from principle. Let us suppose, therefore, for a moment, that they had thought it right to resist THE POWERS THAT BE, and that those who resist DO NOT RECEIVE TO THEMSELVES DAMNATION, but merit the tribute of applause for supporting the natural rights of man; then, as no people on earth were ever more unjustly treated, they would naturally feel their injuries as other men do; and admitting them to have been too weak and inconsiderable, in the first century, to have resisted with effect;—surely, in the second, and much more in the third, thousands and tens of thousands must have been capable of shaking the very foundations of the empire.—So

far from being without means, they seem to have had much greater than many who have disturbed the repose of kingdoms.

Here is, "IMPERIUM IN IMPERIO,"—a regular well united phalanx of men, inured to frugal habits and to a variety of hardships; not a mere mob of levellers, but men taught to obey their religious governors, and submitting to great strictness of discipline. Among their governors, if history had not informed us so, we are sure there must have been some men of genius, fortitude, and capacity, who already had exercised their talents in the art of government, and who possessed that eloquence which can inflame the passions, especially of the lower sort. Cyprian of Carthage is undoubtedly one of these. The same courage, capacity, discretion and activity, which made him an oracle over half the Roman empire among the Christians, would,—if it had been exerted in a military line,—have been formidable to the throne of the Cæsars. Their brethren in the Roman armies could have taught them military discipline. The riches, which a number of them possessed, might have purchased arms and military stores: Those captive bishops, who gained so strong an ascendancy over the ignorant and barbarous nations, might have easily effected alliances between them and others of the Christian name.

Let the reader mark the inference to be drawn from these considerations.—We pretend not to say, who would have prevailed in the end of such a contest, because nothing is more uncertain than the issue of arms: but supposing the Christians to have thought resistance lawful, we maintain that, amidst the distractions of the Roman empire from within and from without, they had both temptations and probabilities sufficiently strong to have induced them to excite seditions and rebellions against their persecutors and oppressors.—In knowledge and civilization they were not inferior to those among whom they lived: It cannot be denied that they were very unjustly treated, and that they possessed the probable means of redressing themselves by force: and further,—we are now arguing on the supposition that they thought it lawful to use those means.—I affirm then, that whichever way we turn, we must be presented with the same conclusion,—namely, that, under such circumstances, resistance would infallibly have taken place;—

whereas, on the contrary, it appears—not from a few scattered passages, but from the whole tenour of the writings of the Christians—and, what is still more, from their uniform practice, without any exception, that they thought it *un-Christian* to seek this mode of relief. Patience, and prayer, and charity, were their only arms: Nor is it possible to find a single instance of a Christian intermeddling with the politics of his time.

Must we not then conclude—That they understood the rules laid down in the thirteenth chapter to the Romans, and other parts of the New Testament of like import, in their plain and literal sense?—That they thought it wrong to revenge injuries, public as well as private, and referred themselves wholly to Him who hath said, "Vengeance is mine!"—I believe we have no other alternative: This was the sum of Christian politics; and in this way of understanding the Gospel-rules of submission and of suffering,—it is not hard to conceive, what an advantage such a spirit of patience and of abstraction from secular politics proved to them, in making them feel themselves strangers and pilgrims on earth, in causing them to long for the heavenly state, in deadening their affections to the world, and in exercising them in faith and charity: And, whenever real Christians, in our times, shall more fully emancipate themselves from the ambitious notions, with which the present habits and prejudices of men infect them, and through Divine Grace, shall catch this same spirit of the primitive Believers, they will then see a beauty in the New Testament principles on this subject, of which they have now little idea.—The lore of the world will then cease to entangle them so strongly; and primitive apostolic faith and practice will again visit the earth in its genuine simplicity.

The monastic spirit, I have already observed, had begun to appear during the Decian persecution. About the year two hundred and seventy lived Anthony the Egyptian, the first founder of these communities. Athanasius has written his Life; and, I doubt not, but many moderns may judge the employment to be a proof of weakness of mind. Posterity will, probably, requite them by being equally rash and uncandid in passing a similar censure on present characters.—In truth, Athanasius was a man of

Anthony
the Egyptian.

A. D. 270.

solid sense and great capacity; but these endowments are not always a defence against fashionable errors; and unhappily, the Monkish superstition was, in his time, growing up into high admiration.—It is much to be wished, that men adverted more closely to the “sins which easily beset themselves” in their own days; for then, they would be less quick-sighted in discovering the absurdities of former ages, and also less disposed to form ostentatious and pharisaical comparisons between what they term modern excellencies and ancient defects.—Anthony, it seems, perverting a few texts of Scripture, took upon himself to live in solitude. His austerities were excessive, and the most ridiculous stories are told of his contests with the devil: They merit not the least attention: I observe in them, however, a dangerous spirit of self-righteous pride and vain-glory, by which this same Anthony was encouraged in his progress, and which will lead a man very far in external shows of holiness, while there is little of the reality. It is probable that his life, as it is recorded by Athanasius, might, as superstition grew more and more reputable, appear admirable in the eyes of many persons, who were much better men than this celebrated monk himself.

We shall, for the present, leave Anthony propagating the monastic disposition, and extending its influence not only into the next century, but for many ages after, and conclude this view of the state of the third century, with expressing our regret—“that the faith and love of the Gospel received, toward the close of it, a dreadful blow from the encouragement of this unchristian practice.”

CHAPTER XXI.

TESTIMONIES TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST FROM ITS ENEMIES.

THE fastidious indifference at least, if not the virulent enmity, shown to the Gospel by the great men of Greece and Rome, during the three first centuries, leaves one little reason to expect much account of Christians through the channel of their writings. Nor is the case materially different in our own days.—A few cursory, sarcastic, and ill-informed reflections are all that, in writers of polite estimation, can be found, concerning

more modern revivals and propagation of evangelical truth and godliness. Something, however, which may throw light on the state of religion in the second and third centuries, is to be gleaned from the hostile contemporary writers, and, perhaps, *Celsus* will be more to our purpose than all the other authors together; particularly, if we attend to the extracts from his writings preserved by Origen.—My views in presenting the reader with the following few quotations from heathen authors, is, not merely to establish the general credibility of the Gospel, but rather, to illustrate the character of real Christians, and to point out some of the effects of the work of the Holy Spirit upon their minds.

In the former part of the second century flourished the Stoic Philosopher Epictetus.—Arrian has published his discourses. In one passage he occasionally speaks of “the Galileans, as indifferent to sufferings,—from madness or from habit.”

These Galileans are obviously Christians.—Through the operation of what cause they were indifferent to sufferings, we shall be willing to learn from those who better understand the subject. Indeed they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, because they were convinced that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Christian faith and hope afford motives truly deserving a better name than madness or habit. But the fact is attested by this prejudiced philosopher,—namely, that Christians were then exposed to singular sufferings, and that they bore them with a composure and serenity so astonishing, that philosophers knew not how to account for their patience.—They did not understand, that they were strengthened with might, by the glorious power of their God, to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.

In the same century, Apuleius, a ludicrous author, in his *Metamorphosis*, speaks of a baker, a good sort of man, troubled with a bad wife,—who was possessed of every vice;—perverse, a drunkard, lewd,—a follower of vain observances,—and a woman, who pretended that the Deity was *ONLY ONE*.

• When Domitian banished the Philosophers from Rome, about the year 94, Epictetus retired to Nicopolis, and died there about the year 161.

I conjecture that Apuleius would have taken no notice of her other crimes, if she had not been guilty of this last. Mark the revolution in sentiment, which Christianity has made in the world. Throughout Europe the character of any man's understanding would, at present, be much impeached, who should seriously assert a plurality of Gods.—In the second century, the belief of the Divine Unity is, by a polite author classed with an assemblage of vices.—What have ye been doing, philosophers, that ye never could rid mankind of that polytheism, which every philosopher now despises!—Open the eyes of your understandings, and learn that God has effected this mighty change by the Gospel.—This woman was, doubtless, a Christian by profession; but we cannot now tell, whether she merited the reproaches with which her memory is loaded; nor can we say, in what sense her husband, who was plainly a pagan, deserved the appellation of a good sort of man;—but we know that the world, without much scruple, denominates its followers to be good sort of men;—and we also know who said,—“If ye were of the world, the world would love its own.”

The extracts from Celsus,—who wrote in the latter end of the second century,—preserved in Origen's work against him, are very valuable in the light which I have stated. I shall select a few passages, partly from the collections of others, and partly from such as I have noticed myself.—The reader must be prepared to hear bitter things. A more spirited calumniator hardly ever existed; but he may serve a purpose which he never intended.—When the following extracts have been seriously considered, the past references to be drawn from them, concerning the nature of the Gospel, and the characters of its professors, cannot fail to present themselves to the mind of every candid inquirer after truth.

“When they say,—Do not EXAMINE, and the like, in their usual manner, surely, it is incumbent on them to teach what those things are which they assert, and whence they are derived.”

“They say,—Wisdom in life is a bad thing, but folly is good.”

“Christ was privately educated, and served for hire in Egypt.* he got acquaint-

ed with miraculous arts there: he returned; and, relying on his power of working miracles, declared himself God.”

“The Apostles were infamous men, publicans, and abandoned mariners.”

“Why should you, when an infant, be carried into Egypt, lest you should be murdered? God should not fear being put to death.”

“Ye say that God was sent to sinners; but why not to those who were free from sin? What harm is it, not to have sinned?”

“Ye encourage sinners, because ye are not able to persuade any really good men; therefore ye open the doors to the most wicked and abandoned.”

“Some of them say, do not EXAMINE, but BELIEVE, and thy FAITH shall save thee.”

With a sneer he makes the Christians say,—“These are our institutions: Let not any man of learning come here, nor any wise man, nor any man of prudence; for these things are reckoned evil by us. But whoever is unlearned, ignorant, and silly, let him come without fear.”—

“Thus, they own that they can gain only the foolish, the vulgar, the stupid slaves, women and children.—They, who conversed with him when alive, and heard his voice, and followed him as their master, when they saw him under punishment and dying, were so far from dying with him or for him, or from being induced to despise sufferings, that they denied that they were his disciples:—but now ye die with him.”

“He had no reason to fear any mortal now, after he had died, and, as ye say, was a God;—therefore, he should have shown himself to all, and particularly, to him that condemned him.”

“He persuaded only twelve abandoned sailors and publicans, and did not persuade even all these.”

“At first, when they were but few, they agreed: But when they became a multitude they were rent again and again; and each will have their own factions; for they had factious spirits from the beginning.”

“They are now so split into different sects, that they have only the name left them in common.”

“All wise men are excluded from the doctrine of their faith! They call to it only fools and men of a servile spirit.”

He frequently upbraids Christians for reckoning him, who had a mortal body,

* The authenticity of St. Matt. 24 chap. which has been unreasonably denied, is supported by this passage.

to be God; and looking on themselves as pious on that account.

"The preachers of their Divine Word only attempt to persuade fools,—mean and senseless persons,—slaves,—women and children.—What harm can there be in learning, or,—in appearing a man of knowledge?—What obstacle can this be to the knowledge of God?"

"We see these itinerants showing readily their tricks to the vulgar, but not approaching the assemblies of wise men; not daring to show themselves THERE: but where they see boys,—a crowd of slaves,—and ignorant men,—there they thrust in themselves and puff off their doctrine."

"You may see weavers, tailors, and fullers, illiterate and rustic men, in their houses,—but not daring to utter a word before persons of age, experience, and respectability: it is, when they get hold of boys, and of silly women, privately, that they recount their wonderful stories; it is then that they teach their young disciples that they must not mind their fathers or their tutors, but obey THEM: Their fathers and guardians, they tell them, are quite ignorant and in the dark, but themselves alone have the true wisdom. And if the children take this advice, they pronounce them happy; and direct them to leave their fathers and tutors, and to go, with the women and their play-fellows, into the chambers of the females, or into a tailor's or fuller's shop, that they may learn perfection."

"In other mysteries, the cryer used to say, Whoever has clean hands, and a good conscience, and a good life, let him come in. But let us hear whom THEY call. 'Whoever is a sinner, a fool, an infant, a lost wretch,—the kingdom of God will receive him.'—An *UNJUST* man, if he humble himself for his crimes, God will receive him; but a *JUST* man, who has proceeded in a course of virtue from the beginning, if HE look up to him, he will not be received."

He compares a Christian teacher to a quack, who promises to heal the sick, on condition that they keep from intelligent practitioners, lest his ignorance be detected.

"Ye will hear them,—though differing so widely from one another, and abusing one another so foully,—making that boast—the world is crucified to me, and I to the world."*

"The same things are better said by the Greeks, and without the imperious denunciation of God, or the Son of God."

"If one sort introduces one doctrine, another another, and all join in saying, 'Believe, if ye would be saved, or depart;' what are they to do, who desire really to be saved? Are they to determine by the throw of a die? Where are they to turn themselves, or whom to believe?"

"Do ye not see, that any man that will, may carry you away and crucify you and your demon:—The Son of God gives you no help."

But enough of Celsus.—He would not deserve a moment's attention, if it were not for the light which he throws on the history of the Christians of his own times,—that is,—of the second century.

It appears evident that there was then a singular sort of persons, subject to all manner of ill treatment from the rest of the world; and who might be hunted down at pleasure by violence or by calumny.—Celsus insults them on account of their defenceless condition. If they had resisted evil with evil, his malignity would have induced him to reproach them on account of their turbulence and seditiousness. Undoubtedly then, they were a meek, quiet, peaceable, inoffensive people. It appears also,—that they worshipped a person named Jesus, who had been crucified at Jerusalem, and,—that they worshipped him as God; and Celsus derides their folly in so doing: In his view of things, that the same person should be both God and man, was the greatest inconsistency. Their doctrine concerning Christ appears to him foolish beyond measure; fit only for the understanding of fools, and beneath the regard of wise men. Even from his loose and sarcastic views of it one may conclude, that they laid great stress on FAITH:—and that the exercise of it was considered as connected with salvation; but that this exercise, in its whole nature, was contrary to all that is esteemed wise and great in the world. It was also a great stumbling-block to Celsus,—that men the most wicked and abandoned might be saved by faith in Jesus, and,—that men's confidence in moral virtues was a bar to their salvation. Nor does it appear that the number of converts among the learned or the great was considerable:—The lower ranks of men were best disposed to

* Gal. vi.

receive it; and the bulk of Christian professors consisted of these.

From these premises, with a careful study of the sacred volume, any man, possessed of a humble spirit, may see WHAT THE RELIGION WAS, which Celsus so vehemently reprobates. It could not be the doctrine of common morality. He owns, indeed, they taught this, though he says that the philosophers taught it better. One may appeal to any person almost at this day, whether Christian morals be not immensely superior to any thing that is to be learnt from Plato, Tully, or Seneca. It has been the fashion to extol the moral part of Scripture,—I fear, with an insidious eye to the doctrinal. What this last was in Celsus's days, he himself, in a measure, tells us. Namely, "Christ crucified, the living and true God, the only Saviour of sinful men;—the necessity of renouncing our own wisdom and righteousness;—salvation through faith alone;—dependence on our supposed goodness, ruinous and fatal."—It is certain, that more moral truths, if they had formed the main part of the Christian scheme, would not so much have provoked the enmity of Celsus.

In other words,—the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, man's fallen state, justification by Jesus Christ alone, divine illumination and influence, these, which excite the ill-will of man in his natural state now as much as they did then;—these were plainly the doctrines which occasioned such misrepresentation and abuse as that, which we have seen.

If the serious reader would take the trouble to examine a variety of controversial writings published against the revival of godliness in our own times, he could not fail to be struck with a remarkable conformity of taste and sentiment between Celsus and many who call themselves Christian pastors. Circumstances vary: The tenets of religious profession alter according to the course of things in this world; and hence, the undiscerning will be liable to form a wrong estimate. But, in reality, there is no "new thing under the sun."—That which, in our times, has been derided as *ENTHUSIASM*, was treated in the manner we have just described, by Celsus and others, in the third century; and he, who pleases, may now see in England the same sort of persons, living by the faith of the Son of God, and held in contempt by persons of the same stamp as Celsus.—It has frequently been

well observed, that this adversary of Jesus Christ gives a good testimony to the miracles and facts of the Gospel;—and I add, with much satisfaction, that he is also an excellent witness to the work of the Spirit of God in his day, by showing us what sort of doctrine was preached and professed by Christians at that time.

Lucian of Samosata was a contemporary of Celsus. He has already been mentioned, as throwing considerable light on the history of Christians, in the story of Peregrinus. The delusion into which this hypocritical professor was suffered to fall, after his apostasy, deserves to be noticed as a warning to those, who use the name of Jesus for a cloak to sinister pursuits.

He publicly burnt himself in the sight of all Greece, soon after the Olympic games were over.* He did it to gain himself a name, and "he had his reward."—Heathen authors speak honourably of him. The lustre of his philosophic life, and his ostentatious suicide, expiated, in the eyes of men of this world, the guilt and infamy of his juvenile profession of the Gospel.—A statue was erected to him at Parium in Mysia, which was supposed to be oracular.

That which in a Christian view is the depth of iniquity, may seem, to misguided and vain philosophers, the perfection of virtue. "THE LORD SEETH NOT AS MAN SEETH."

Lucian tells us also of a person, named Alexander, who deluded mankind by oracular falsehoods. Some Epicureans detected and exposed his fallacies, which made him declare that Pontus was full of Atheists and Christians, who had the assurance to raise slanderous stories against him: And he excited the people to drive them away with stones. He instituted mysterious rites, like those of Athens; and, on the first day of the solemnity, proclamation was made,—as at Athens,—to the following effect: "If any Epicurean, CHRISTIAN, or Atheist, be come hither as a spy upon these mysteries, let him depart with all speed; but I promise a happy initiation to those who believe in God." Then they thrust the people away,—he going before and saying, "Away with the Christians!" then the multitude cried out again, "Away with the Epicureans!"

Lucian died at the age of 90, A. D. 190, circiter.

* Lardner's Collect. chap. 212.

We see here again that there is nothing "new under the sun." A fervent or artful supporter of old Pagan superstitions finds himself opposed by two sorts of people, the most opposite to one another, which can possibly exist,—Epicurean sceptics or men of no religious principle,—and Christian believers. So at this day,—Christians and Sceptics will unite in discountenancing Papal superstitions;—but with how different a spirit!—The one with compassion and gravity,—the other with carelessness and levity:—and, with how different a design!—The former to establish the true worship of God,—the latter to spread universal infidelity.

The Greek author, Lucian, was himself an Epicurean,—abounding in wit and profaneness. His Dialogues are full of sarcastic insinuations against the fashionable idolatry.—He was not aware, that he was co-operating with Christians in subverting the abominations, which had subsisted for so many ages. His writings were, doubtless, of use in this respect: And, who can foresee how serviceable, under God, the present fashionable spirit of depreciating and lowering Popery may be to the future general establishment of Christianity,—though nothing be farther from the thoughts or wishes of our present political sceptics and infidels.

There is a dialogue, called *Philopatris*, ascribed to Lucian, but probably written by some other person somewhat later. No doubt, it is of high antiquity. It ridicules the doctrine of the Trinity. "ONE THREE, THREE ONE. The most high God; Son of the Father; the Spirit proceeding from the Father." Such are the expressions in the dialogue. The author speaks also of "a beggarly, sorrowful company of people." He insinuates their disaffection to government;—that they wished for bad news, and delighted in public calamities;—and that some of them fasted ten whole days without eating, and spent whole nights in singing hymns.—Who does not see in all this the misrepresentation of an enemy, describing men of holy lives and mortified affections, who worshipped the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and who, in their desires and temper, were elevated above the world.

Aristides the Sophist, another contemporary of Celsus, speaks with indignation against certain persons of his day, whom, he observes, in manners to be not unlike the

impious people in Palestine; for they acknowledged not the gods: they differ from the Greeks and all good men, are dexterous in subverting houses and disturbing families: they contribute nothing to public festivals, but dwell in corners, and are wonderfully "wise in their own conceits."*

Thus, when men were out of humour with any persons, they compared them to Christians, who, in this way, were made the "off-scouring of all things".—By such evidences as these, however, their singular abstinence from all reigning vices and follies, their steady adherence to the worship of the living God, and the strength of the divine operations on their minds, are proved beyond contradiction.

Much about the same time, Galen, the famous physician, gave testimony to the firmness and perseverance of Christians. "It is easier," Galen died at the age of 70, A. D. 193. says he, "to convince the disciples of Moses and Christ than physicians and philosophers who are addicted to particular sects." Thus it appears that their fortitude or their obstinacy was at that time PROVERBIAL: and moreover, that they were a people then well known in the world.

Plotinus was, in this century, one of the most celebrated disciples of the new Platonic school, the genius of which, as formed by Ammonius, has been before described. He had studied under Ammonius himself: and, by the strength of his parts, the multiplicity of his literary acquisitions, and the gravity of his manners, he attained a very high reputation in the world. He imitated Socrates in his pretensions to a communion with a demon; and was, by his disciples, looked on as something celestial. Persons of the greatest quality revered him: The emperor Gallienus was once on the point of giving him a ruined city in Campania, in which he might settle a Platonic republic.—The man seems, to his dying day, to have supported his philosophical reveries.—When he was actually dying, he said, "I am endeavouring to rejoice that, which is divine in us, to the divine part of the universe."† Undoubtedly he alluded to the notion of "God being the soul of the universe,"—that Pantheistic compound of pride and atheistic absurdity, which was the proper creed of most of the an-

* Lardner's Collect. ch. xx. † Fleury.

cient Philosophers, and was even more impious than all the fables of vulgar Paganism.*

The oracle of Apollo, we are told, after his death, informed his admirers that his soul was in the Elysian fields with Plato and Pythagoras.—Such were the artifices by which Satan and his human followers endeavored to raise up rivals to the Christians. In a work professedly illustrating the operations of the Spirit of God, it seemed proper to take notice of the contrasts, or rather of the counterfeits by which the spirit of falsehood endeavored to support the declining cause of idolatry.—Its vulgar and gross scenes were, in part, abandoned, and a more refined habit was given to it by philosophy, which pretended to wisdom and virtue in a high degree. But human philosophy could not produce holiness, because humility and the faith of Jesus were not there: Pride was its predominant feature; and while thousands found, even in this life, the salutary benefits of Christianity, vain philosophers prated concerning virtue, but effected nothing either for the honour of God, or the good of mankind.

One of the most studious and laborious disciples of Plotinus was Amelios. It is evident from a passage† of Eusebius,

Plotinus died at the age of 66, A. D. 270. that he made attempts to unite something of Christianity with Platonism, just as we have seen Origen,—who was of the same school,—mix

something of the latter with the former, to the great prejudice of the Gospel. "This was the Word," says he, "by whom, he being himself eternal, all things that exist were made;—the same whom the barbarian affirms to be with God, and to be God: the Word by whom all things were made, and in whom every thing that was made has its life and being; who, descending into body and putting on flesh, took the form of man; though he even then gave proof of the majesty of his nature; nay, and after his dissolution he was deified again, and is God, the same he was before he descended into body, and flesh, and man."

This may be called no mean testimony to the Gospel of St. John,—for he is,

doubtless, the barbarian here mentioned:—The ideas of Christianity, it seems, in some loose ambiguous manner, were admitted by these philosophers, and incorporated into their system; and so, in modern times, Swedenburgh, Rousseau, or Bolingbroke, have not been unwilling to ennoble their compositions with sublime sentiments taken from the sacred writings, but confusedly understood; while yet, they stood aloof from the society of Christians, affected to think them little better than barbarians, and made not, in their own case, the least approach to the faith and love of Jesus.

Thus also Longinus, a scholar of the same school, and well acquainted with Plotinus, in his treatise on the Sublime, produces a fine quotation from the first chapter of Genesis, and calls Moses a man of no mean genius.‡ Likewise, a fragment of this same writer, which has been preserved;—and of which I see no reason to doubt the authenticity,—speaks of Paul of Tarsus, as one of the greatest of orators; and also, as the first supporter of a doctrine by no means proved to be true.

This passage is exactly in the style of Longinus,—rather nervous than elegant. It is found in a manuscript of the Gospels of very good authority; and no sufficient reason has been given for suspecting its genuineness.—The internal evidence is all against such a suspicion. The supposed author was a most judicious critic,—if ever there was a person in the world, who deserved that character;—and therefore he was very capable, by the excellency of his taste, of seeing and relishing the beauties of St. Paul's compositions: He possessed a very candid temper,—which would dispose him to acknowledge them; and he was perfectly indifferent in regard to religion,—which accounts for his overlooking what ought principally to have fixed his attention. For these reasons, I reject the gratuitous and improbable assertion, which has been made,—that this clause concerning St. Paul was forged by some Christian.†

We see, hence, how well Christians were known in the third century;—and what respect their doctrine, even then obtained in the world from those, who, as far as their own personal interests might

* See this point ably discussed in Warburton's *Legation of Moses*, Book III. Sect. 4. [Vol. iii. 2vo. edit. 1811.]

† Euseb. Pr. Ev.—See Lardner's *Collections*, chap. xxxiii.

‡ The *trigon arag*.

† Longinus is said to have been put to death by Aurelian, A. D. 273.

be affected, were either averse to embrace the Gospel, or at least quite careless concerning it.

Porphyry is the last unwilling witness for Christians whom I shall mention within the third century. There is a

work, indeed, bearing his name, entitled the *Philosophy of Oracles*, in which there are very strong testimonies in favour of the Gospel: but, as it appears to have been written in the time of Constantine, or after the

civil establishment of Christianity, the consideration of it properly belongs to the history of the next century.

This man was born at Tyre in Phœnicia,—was a scholar of Plotinus, and,—like the rest of that school,—maintained a gravity of manners, and entered vigorously into Platonic refinements.—In acrimony against Christians he far exceeded them all. He took much pains to overturn the Gospel; and it must be confessed his learning and acuteness were considerable. The very few fragments extant of his works afford us no great opportunity to judge of the extent of his capacity, or of the depth of his judgment: but, from the serious pains taken by the ancient Christians to confute him, we may conclude that his abilities were of a far higher order than those of Celsus.

In a passage, preserved by Eusebius,* he censures the famous Origen for leaving Gentilism and embracing the barbarian temerity,—that is, the Gospel. That he states the fact erroneously is certain: for Origen was brought up under Christian parents; but I had almost said, that that great man merited such a reproach on account of the extravagant respect, which he paid to the enemies of Christianity. Porphyry allows him to have been a great proficient in philosophy; and says, that he was very conversant with Plato, Longinus, and the works of the Pythagoreans and Stoics;—and, that he learnt from these the allegorical method of explaining the Greek mysteries, and by forced interpretations, inconsistent in themselves, and unsuitable to those writings, applied it to the Jewish Scriptures.

FAS EST ET AB HOSTE DOCERI.—The fanciful mode of Origen in interpreting Scripture is here justly condemned by Porphyry: or, which is the same thing,—the

Ammonian scheme is allowed by him to be unsuitable to those writings. Origen did much mischief by making such attempts: Let the word of God stand simple and alone; and let philosophers be left to their own inventions:—The enmity of Porphyry was not abated by the complaisance of philosophizing Christians; nor did their concessions make any converts to evangelical truth.

His captious reasonings against the book of Daniel show him to be a bitter, but ineffectual adversary to Christianity: The consideration of these, however, fall not within our design.—The same may be said of various cavils which he made to many passages in the Gospel:—We have seen a sufficient specimen of the same spirit in Celsus.

Ingenuity and malevolence, when united, seldom fail in forming plausible objections, wherever opportunities offer. The censure which St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Galatians, has left upon St. Peter, engaged the attention of Porphyry, and induced him, from an occasional difference between the Apostles, to form an argument against the whole of their religion. I have, already, in the former part of this volume, stated my deliberate judgment on this subject;—and, I may here add,—that the very clear testimony which St. Peter, toward the conclusion of his second epistle, gives to the inspired character of St. Paul, at the same time that it demonstrates the harmony of the Apostles, remains one of the fairest monuments of St. Peter's humility and candour.—On examination, then, it appears, that these attacks of enemies are, in fact, so many evidences of the virtues and graces of the Christians. Surely truth, and wisdom, and goodness may well be presumed to be with those, whom their adversaries assault with such frivolous objections.

On account of an epidemical disorder raging in a certain city, Porphyry observes, “Men wonder now that distempers have seized the city so many years: they forget that Æsculapius and the other gods no longer dwell among them: for, since Jesus was honoured, no one has received any public benefit from† the gods.”

What a testimony is this to the great progress of Christianity in his day! Ma-

* Euseb. Book 6, chap. 18.

* Lardner's Collections, chap. xxxvii.

† Eusebius.

levellence confesses, at the very time that it impudently and absurdly complains.

"Matrons and women," says Porphyry, "compose their senate, and rule in the churches; and the priestly order is disposed of according to their good pleasure."^{*}

The falsity of all this is notorious; but the testimony here given, by the mouth of an enemy, to the piety of the female Christians, is perfectly agreeable to the accounts of the New Testament, and to the history of all revivals of godliness in every age;—in none of which women had the government; but, in all a great personal concern by their pious exertions. "There is neither male nor female, but YE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST JESUS."

"If Christ be the way of salvation, the truth, and the life; and if they only, who believe in him, shall be saved, what became of the men who lived before his coming?"†

The reader has often heard similar objections made in our days. The Christians preached then the same doctrine of salvation—only BY CHRIST, which is now stigmatized as uncharitable.

"A person asked Apollo how to make his wife relinquish Christianity? It is easier perhaps, replied the oracle, to write on water, or to fly into the air, than to reclaim her. Leave her, in her folly, to bemoan in a faint mournful voice the dead God, who publicly suffered death from judges of singular wisdom."[‡]

This story, told by Porphyry, is a memorable testimony of the constancy of Christians.—It also hence appears, that they were accustomed to worship Jesus as God; and, that they were not ashamed of this, notwithstanding the ignominy of his cross. The attestation, however, here given of the wisdom of Caiaphas and of Pontius Pilate, will not so readily be admitted.

The enemies of vital godliness, in our days, may see from the various cavils and misrepresentations contained in these extracts, that their ancient brethren in infidelity have been beforehand with them in all their most material objections. The doctrine, the spirit, and the conduct of real Christians, appears from these evidences: And the work of the Spirit of God on the hearts of men, in attaching them to Jesus, and in divorcing them from

all that the world delights in, is no less manifest than the malignity of our depraved nature in hating and opposing it.

CHAPTER XXII.

CONNEXION BETWEEN THE DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS.

I AM sensible, that many parts of the foregoing history may appear to several persons defective in point of candour.—"Why such solicitude to prove men Trinitarians in opinion?—Why so strict an eye kept, all along, on the doctrines commonly called Evangelical by enthusiasts and sectaries?—Of what importance are opinions, if men's practice be right?—Why is not all the stress of commendation laid on holiness of life, on integrity, and on charity?"

This language is specious, but is chargeable with the following erroneous notion:—It supposes that there is no real connexion between doctrine and practice. Now, a sound Christian cannot admit,—however fashionable the sentiment may be,—that all sorts of religious opinions are equally influential, or equally ineffective in the production of virtuous conduct. The Scripture connects sanctification with belief of the truth.^{*} Our Lord himself prays that his disciples may be "sanctified through the truth:"† "The blood of Christ purges the conscience from dead works to serve the living God:"‡ and a right faith in Jesus "overcomes the world."—St. John challenges men to prove that they can overcome the world by any other way:§ and, in the chapter now alluded to, he is very particular in describing what that faith is. In fine, Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."||—If then this zeal for good works be the EFFECT of his redemption,—how is it possible that a person, who disbelieves the important doctrines essentially concerned in that redemption, should have any true zeal for good works. By the supposition, the man never uses, but has an aversion to, the means, which God has expressly ap-

* Eusebius.

† 1bid.

‡ Buller's History.

* John viii. 12.

† Heb. ix. 14.

‡ Titus ii. 14.

§ 2 Thess. ii. 13.

|| 1 John v. 3.

pointed and made necessary for the attainment of this end.—Let this concise argument be well considered.

The peculiar doctrines of the Gospel are,—Original sin,—Justification by the grace of Jesus Christ,—His Godhead and atonement,—the Divinity and the efficacious influences of the Holy Ghost. We appeal to the Scriptures for the proof of this assertion. If it cannot be proved **THENCE**, it is not to be proved at all. The tradition of the Church, if it were more uniform than it is, can never sufficiently demonstrate it. But still, an authentic history of the character of the first Christians, is very instructive,—and as such, merits our most serious attention. We have found that the doctrines just stated, were, in the primitive times, constantly held by men allowed to be the most wise and upright. Surely, so remarkable a fact might well induce those, who, in our times, oppose these doctrines with all their power,—to hesitate a little,—to entertain doubts whether their own sentiments be right; and lastly—no longer to call their adversaries zealots in **SPECULATIVE** religion.—One would think, that when the Scripture itself affirms the existence of a connexion between faith and practice, and when the history of Christian antiquity exemplifies that connexion, neither the articles of belief themselves ought to be coldly denominated **SPECULATIVE**, nor the zeal used in supporting them be reproached with the contemptuous name of **ENTHUSIASM**.—Such reflections as these, it is hoped, may remove from the mind of the reader any unfavourable idea of the historian's disposition in regard to candour.—True candour consists,—not in endeavouring to render an adversary contemptible by using the hard terms, enthusiast, fanatic, bigot, and such like; but in fairly bringing forward and digesting evidence, and in drawing warrantable inferences from it.

Two things have been shown to have uniformly taken place during the three first centuries;—first, that there existed, all along, a number of persons bearing the Christian name, whose lives proved them to be the “excellent of the earth.” And secondly, that, as far as appears, the character of genuine virtue belonged exclusively to men who espoused the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. From the Apostles down to Ignatius, Polycarp, and Irenæus; and, from them, to the age of

Origen, both these assertions are demonstrable by the clearest evidence.

Origen alone, of all persons of superior reputation in the Church, has been suspected as deficient in point of orthodoxy. If the suspicion were swelled into a certain proof, the discredit, which his philosophic mixtures have brought on his character, and the censures, which so many wise and good men have so freely passed on him, as unsound in the faith, would rather prove our assertion of the uniformity of Christian belief in these articles than the contrary. But, that Origen, on the whole, believed these doctrines, is sufficiently proved by express passages of his works:—and his well-known curious and adventurous spirit of inquiry in subjects on which he never meant to be positive, will account for his ambiguities.

I cannot allow Dionysius of Alexandria, merely because he was once suspected to be heretical, to be an exception to my position. His well-known explanation of himself sufficiently confutes the surmise. The age of Cyprian is full of the most luminous proofs. Even the treatise of Novatian on the Trinity is itself a strong argument on the same side of the question. An elaborate, copious, and distinct treatise on such a subject written by an innovator,—and the **FIRST** **DISSENTER**,—against whom I have freely owned the best men of those times were much too censorious,—would doubtless have been branded with peculiar infamy in the Church, if it had contained any sentiments contrary to the apostolic faith. Its deviation from truth would have been marked with peculiar asperity. But it is universally allowed, that the Novatians held the same doctrines as the general Church, and differed only in point of discipline. What greater proof can be desired than such an uniformity?

Perhaps the cause of Paul of Samosata may illustrate the subject still more forcibly.—A bishop was, by the concurrent voice of the whole Christian Church, degraded and expelled, because he opposed these doctrines.—The excellent lives of men of orthodox views are evident in these times of true goodness. I cannot find any proofs of such excellence in other persons who called themselves Christians. I acknowledge the scantiness of historical materials: I make allowance for the prejudices of writers; and, I do not forget, that the compositions

of none, but of the orthodox of those times, have come down to us. But, after all, it seems impossible to reject the repeated testimony of such a man as Irenæus, to the wickedness of the heretics. —The immoral character of Paul of Samosata is well known; and men of real holiness and virtue can scarcely be entirely hid in any age in which they exist.

We have been told indeed great things of the Ebionites; and they have been set up as the true standard of primitive orthodoxy. But it seems scarcely possible for any man of learning, who has a disposition to examine things fairly and candidly, to lay weight on such a wild and groundless opinion.—Who is this Ebion! —“Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”—Let it be admitted that he and his party believed and thought of St. Paul and of Christian doctrines, and of Christ himself, exactly as some persons do, who at this day call themselves RATIONAL CHRISTIANS.—Will it thence follow that the holy Scriptures will be best interpreted by consulting the opinions of an obscure person, of whom all we know is contained in only a few lines, and whose very existence is but faintly proved; and whose sect also, though it had certainly an EARLY, if any, existence, was condemned in the Christian churches, and even by Origen himself, as heretical!*

It must be admitted that the Ebionites, in not receiving St. Paul's Epistles, as Origen tells us, acted CONSISTENTLY. Their sentiments, and those of St. Paul, are in direct opposition to each other.—But, what are we to think of men who rejected thirteen epistles of the New Testament, of whose divine authority there never was any doubt among real Christians?

And, though the Epistle to the Hebrews has abundant proofs of Divine inspiration, yet, if one were to allow, for a moment, that it was only the work of some pious person of very high antiquity in the Church, and held in very great estimation, who, that soberly examines the balance of evidences, would hesitate to decide that its authority greatly exceeded any possible respect due to the opinions of the Ebionites! Then,—in this regular argumentative composition we find certain doctrines enlarged on very much,

and supported by the united voices of the Old and New Testament,—which doctrines, by an obscure sect, of whom we, literally, know next to nothing, are barely denied.—A chain of close reasoning on the one hand;—mere positive assertions on the other!

In judging of historical evidence, no rule can be better founded, than that the concurrent testimony of the best writers ought always to outweigh the single affirmation of any particular person.—It is on this ground that the relation of Persian affairs by Ctesias is looked on as romantic. The account of the death of Cyrus also, as slain by Tomyris, the Scythian Queen, has no credit, because of the superior credibility of Xenophon, and of other historians. And he would be thought a weak critic in history, who should in our days assert, that

“Charlemagne, with all his peerage, fell by Fontarabia.”

Milton, as a poet, may be allowed to say this on the evidence of romances: But sober history, which asserts in general the contrary, must be believed.—On such weak foundations seems to me to stand the authority of the Ebionites in matters of Christian doctrine.

Let not the reader forget, that the object of this whole argument is to establish the indissoluble connexion, which subsists between principle and practice.—For this purpose it may be useful to attend a little to the INTERNAL NATURE of Christian principles.

If there be a favourite point in Scripture, it is the recommendation of humility. The truly humble, with all their imperfections, will be admitted into heaven; the proud, with all the virtue compatible with pride, will be excluded. Those doctrines, therefore, which support humility must be divine: those which nourish pride must be “earthly, sensual, devilish.”* Now the evangelical doctrines, just mentioned, are all of the former sort. The more they are relished and admired, the more do they direct the mind to honour God, to feel even infinite obligation to him, to entertain the lowest ideas of ourselves, to confound the pride of intellect, of riches, of virtue, of every thing human. To sing salvation to God and the Lamb, to confess our desert of destruction, and to ascribe our deliverance from it to the

* See Origen ad Celsum, Book 3, towards the end.

* James iii. 15.

atoning blood of Jesus,—this is the employment of heaven. The tastes and tempers adapted to such employment must be formed here on earth by GRACE ; and the whole work of the Spirit, which we have seen exemplified in three centuries, is to produce and support these dispositions : And, in the words and actions of holy men, we have seen this effect. They believed heartily the truth of doctrines the most humiliating. They were poor in spirit, and patient under the severest treatment and the most cruel injuries, because they were conscious of deserving much worse : they were contented in the meanest circumstances, because they felt the beauty of his condescension, who though HE was rich became poor for their sakes, and who has provided for them sure and eternal riches. They were serene and confident in God, because they viewed HIM as their Father through the grace of Christ ; they were full of charity, because they knew the love of God in Christ : and, in honour they preferred others to themselves, because they were ever conscious of their own depravity :—in fine,—they gladly endured reproach for Christ's sake, because they knew his kingdom was not of this world.

Now take from these men the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and all the motives and springs within them of those actions which are peculiarly christian, are annihilated.—Mere morals, as taught by sensible heathens, and whatever was by them esteemed reputable in social life, may remain ; but that, which is properly of a pious and humble nature is no more.

For, whoever daily feels himself to be helpless, corrupt, and unworthy ; the man, whose hope of divine favour cannot exist for a moment, but under the belief of the most stupendous grace ; the man, who is compelled to pray by the sense of his constant wants, and who experiences the answer of prayer by repeated supernatural aids, such a one must be habituated to the perpetual exercise of cultivating humbling reflections concerning himself, and GRATEFUL feelings towards his Maker. It is easy to see what a foundation is here laid of meekness, gentleness, modesty, submission to the will of God, and of genuine compassion for the most wicked and most injurious,—the truly humbled Christian always remembering that he himself, by nature, is a child of wrath, as well as others.—Nor is there one among the numerous virtues, for

which the primitive Christians were so much renowned, but it may be traced up to these principles.

It has been said, indeed, that the sense of gratitude to God may be as strong in the minds of those who think better of human nature, in its present state, because they must own they are indebted to God for their natural powers and faculties. But the very feelings of the same human nature itself contradict the position. Something like gratitude and humility may be produced, where men are every moment, by experience, made sensible of their dependent condition : not so, where they only admit it in general theory, but are not led, experimentally, to an habitual sense of their real state. Do parents expect to find a more grateful and more humble conduct in their children, by making them completely independent at once, or, by supplying them liberally indeed, but still in such a way as to keep them continually sensible of their dependence ?

The influence of anti-evangelical doctrines on the practice is but too evident.

—Those, who espouse them, if preserved, by Providence, in the practice of a decent moral conduct, are, among ourselves at this day, the proudest of men. Even when they attempt to be humble, the power of pride breaks forth and bears down all before it. They feel and discover great self-sufficiency : No subject of religion is too hard for their understandings : and in all disputable questions, they are sure to decide in that way which most gratifies vain-glory and self-conceit. The teachers of this stamp, however low and limited in capacity and education, are continually exercising the most unbounded, and often the most ridiculous arrogance. They are apt to wonder that the common people have no EARS for them : They do not consider that they themselves have no VOICE for the people. The views of God, of Christ, and of human nature, which they exhibit, suit not the unsophisticated taste of the common people, but rather accord with the pert and vain notions of dabblers in theology and metaphysics. In a word, they contradict experience ; and it is not to be wondered at, that those of their hearers, who have any reasonable modesty, and the least tincture of humility, cannot relish their discourses, because the only food which is adapted to the taste of a miserable sinner is not ministered to them.

Deserted by the populace, such ministers as those usually betake themselves to the higher classes: The favour of a few persons of rank compensates to them the want of regard from the multitude; and if they cannot boast of numerous congregations, they console themselves at least with the thought, that theirs are genteel. — Their own account of them is "that they are both genteel and rational."

Politics,—the affairs of nations,—the reformation of states; **THESE** are to them the grand scenes which agitate their passions. To instruct ministers of states is their ambition: To bring souls to Christ is left to those, whom they, contemptuously, denominate Enthusiasts. Nor does the least true pathos appear in any of their writings and orations, except in the support of civil liberty,—a subject, most important and most valuable, no doubt; but, with them, ever carried to excess, and, even when treated in its best manner, belonging rather to the province of statesmen and of legislators than to that of divines.—Whoever has attended to the demeanour of these men, cannot fail to have marked them, as evidently haughty, over-bearing, impatient of contradiction; and, of all others, the least fitted, in their tempers, to suffer for the cross of Christ: They are, however, exceedingly prone,—to represent themselves as actually persecuted;—to enlarge on the iniquity of all restraining or

excluding laws in ecclesiastical concerns;—and, lastly, with much arrogance, to boast of their sincerity and soundness in matters of religion,—in an age, when every one knows that there is not the least probability of their being compelled to undergo any fiery trial that might be the test of true Christian zeal, fortitude, and patience.

Are **THESE** the Christians of the three first centuries?—Or, were those, whom Celsus scorned, such men as **THESE**?—The facts presented to the reader, in this volume, forbid the conclusion.—For if indeed they were men of this class, their worldly and ambitious spirit might easily have found some of the many pretenders to the Roman empire, with whom they might have united. We should have seen Christians active in politics, bargaining with different competitors for the empire, and insisting on some communication of temporal powers and privileges to themselves. Men, so void of heavenly ambition, would have displayed that which is of the earth; and if Ebion's religious sentiments had been then as prevalent as they are now, the humble, meek, charitable, passive Christians would not have adorned the historic page; but, on the contrary, the predominant characters of the foregoing narrative, must have much more resembled the turbulent, aspiring, political sons of Arius and Socinus in our own times.

CENTURY IV.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERSECUTION OF DIOCLESIAN.

THE last century concluded with some symptoms of a storm ready to burst on the Church, which had long been in a state of ease and prosperity, and was at the same time deeply declined from the purity and simplicity of the Gospel. Besides the martyrdom of Marcellus in Africa,* an attempt had been made in a more general, and yet in a covert manner, to corrupt the army. It was put to the option of Christian officers, whether they would offer sacrifice, and enjoy their dignity, or refuse and be deprived. Many were desirous of retiring into private life, to avoid the trial. Many however showed a sincere regard to the kingdom of Christ, and contentedly lost their preferment. Some few were put to death for a terror to the rest. But the general persecution, which afterwards destroyed such numbers, was withheld for some time.† In this prelude, which has been mentioned above, and of which we have only a dark and imperfect account, something of the political manœuvres of Dioclesian seems conspicuous. It is evident that after he had so long favoured the Christians, he had now contracted a prejudice against them, though at first he made use of artifice rather than violence.

This emperor had an associate called Maximian, and they had under them two Cæsars, Galerius and Constantius. The last-mentioned only of the four was a person of probity and humanity. The other three were tyrants, though the savageness of Galerius was the most remarkable. He met Dioclesian at Nicomedia, where he usually kept his court, in the winter, in the nineteenth year of his reign, and in the year of A. D. 302. our Lord 302, and determined, if possible, to instigate him to measures against the Christians, still more sanguinary and decisive.‡ This man had a mother extremely bigoted to pa-

ganism, who almost every day employed herself in sacrifices. The Christians about her refused to partake of the idolatrous feasts, and gave themselves up to fasting and prayer. Hence her mind was incensed against the whole body, and she stimulated her son, who was as superstitious as herself, to seek their destruction. —A whole winter Dioclesian and Galerius were engaged in secret counsels. The latter proposed a general persecution; the former remonstrated against the impolicy of such sanguinary measures, and was for limiting the persecution to the officers of the court and the soldiers. Finding himself unable to stem the fury of Galerius, he called a council of a few judges and officers. Some gave it as their opinion, that the Christians should in general be put to death; and others, induced by fear or flattery, assented. Still Dioclesian was averse, and through policy or superstition determined to consult the oracle of Apollo at Miletus. Apollo answered, as it might be expected, in a manner friendly to the views of Galerius. Staggered with repeated importunities, the old emperor still hesitated, and could not be persuaded to attempt the demolition of Christianity by bloodshed; whereas Galerius was desirous to burn alive those who refused to sacrifice to the heathen gods.

The feast of the Terminalia was the day appointed to commence the operations against the Christians. Early in the morning, an officer with guards came to the great church at Nicomedia, and bursting open the doors, sought for the image of God. So says my author; though if this be not a mere flourish of rhetoric, they must have been strangely ignorant of the sentiments of the followers of Jesus. The Scriptures which were found were burnt; every thing was given to plunder. While all things were in this confusion, the two emperors, looking at the scene from the palace, were long in doubt whether they should order the edifice to be burnt. The prudent opinion of Dioclesian at length prevailed, who feared the effect of a conflagration on the neighbouring buildings. The Pretorian soldiers were therefore sent with axes and

* See Ch. XVII. of preceding Century.

† Euseb. B. VIII. C. IV.

‡ Lactantius de M. P.

other iron tools, and in a few hours levelled the whole building with the ground.

The next day an Edict appeared, by which men of the Christian religion, of whatever rank or degree, were deprived of all honour and dignity; were exposed to torture; and every one might have justice against them; whilst they were debarred the benefit of the laws in all cases without exception.* Thus was the Christian world at once exposed to all possible insults without redress. The spirit of man naturally revolts against injustice so flagrant, and a Christian was found hardly enough, under the transports of indignation, to pull down and tear the Edict. He was burned alive for his indiscretion, and bore his sufferings with admirable, and, it is to be hoped, with Christian patience.

Sometime after, a part of the palace was found to be on fire: the Christians were charged with the fact: and the eunuchs of the house were accused. Dioclesian himself was present, and saw his servants burnt in the flames. It is remarkable, that the servants of Galerius were not put to the torture: while he himself took much pains to keep up the imagination of the old emperor. After fifteen days a second fire broke out, and Galerius left the palace in a hurry, expressing his fear of being burnt alive. Lactantius, without hesitation, charges all this to the artifices of Galerius.

Dioclesian now thoroughly in earnest, raged against all sorts of men who bore the Christian name, and obliged among others his wife and daughter to sacrifice.

* In a passage, which seems to be misplaced by some mistake, Eusebius observes, that in the 10th year of Dioclesian, edicts were every where suddenly published, by which it was ordered, that churches should be levelled with the ground, the sacred books consumed by fire, persons of dignity disgraced, common people made slaves if they persisted in Christianity. Not long after, says he, other letters were published, by which it was enacted, that all the bishops every where should first be cast into bonds, and afterwards be compelled by every method to sacrifice. These measures of the court increasing gradually in severity and horror, show that it was not without reluctance, that Dioclesian was induced to consent to an universal carnage, though he too well agreed with Galerius in forming a system for the extinction of the Christian name.

Doubtless he suspected them at least of a secret regard for Christianity. Presbyters and deacons were seized and condemned in a summary way to death. Eunuchs of the greatest power in the palace were slain, and persons of every age and sex were burnt. It was tedious to destroy men singly; fires were made to burn numbers together, and men with mill-stones fastened

about their necks were thrown into the sea. Judges were every where at work in compelling men to sacrifice. The prisons were full. Unheard-of tortures were invented; and, to prevent the possibility of Christians obtaining justice, altars were placed in courts, at which plaintiffs were obliged to sacrifice, before their cause could be heard. The other two emperors were directed by letters to proceed in the same violent course. Maximian, who governed in Italy, obeyed with savage alacrity. Constantius with reluctance demolished the churches, while he preserved the persons of Christians.

The persecution pervaded the whole Roman world, except France, where the mild Constantius ruled; and from east to west, to use the language of Lactantius, three monsters of horrible ferocity raged.

I am aware that a laborious attempt has been made to deprecate the accounts of this persecution. If I think it needless to relate distinctly all the sufferings of Christians under it, I must not however be supposed to countenance such attempts. The agreement of Lactantius and Eusebius, both contemporary authors of credit, is apparent. That such edicts were published, that they were strictly enforced, that a systematical and serious design of extinguishing the Gospel was formed, these things are certain. Even if we had no particular martyrologies extant, we might be assured, from circumstances, that much blood must have been spilt, and much misery endured, not only in a regular and legal way, but also by tumultuary violence, and by the malice of men combined against a set of persons deprived universally of the protection of the laws. There wanted not some instances of humanity and generosity in Pagans towards their Christian friends and relations. But whoever knows what the passions of men are capable of, when set

The Persecution of Dioclesian began

A. D. 303, in the 20th year of this Emperor; and is the 10th Persecution of the Christians.

afflict and suffered to act without check or control, will not doubt that the sufferings of Christians in this period must have been far greater than can be related by any historian. Thus did God at once punish their sins, revive his work in their hearts by sanctified affliction, evidence the extreme depravity of mankind, and above all, illustrate his own power and wisdom in baffling the rage of Satan,* and in defending and delivering his Church, when every thing seemed combined for its destruction. Should any be inclined to pay more regard to the testimony of heathens than of Christians, let them hear Libanius, the friend of Julian the apostate, who thus speaks in his funeral oration on that emperor. "They who adhered to a corrupt religion (he means the Christian) were in great terrors, and expected that their eyes would be plucked out, that their heads would be cut off, and that rivers of their blood would flow from the multitude of slaughters. They apprehended their new Master would invent new kinds of torments, in comparison of which, mutilation, sword, fire, drowning, being buried alive, would appear but slight pains. For the preceding emperors had employed against them all these kinds of punishments." He goes on to commend Julian for using milder methods. Two pillars in Spain were also monuments of the systematic cruelty of this persecution, on one of which was this inscription: "Dioclesian, Jovian, Maximian Heruleus, Cæsares Augusti, for having extended the Roman empire in the East and West, and for having extinguished the name of Christians, who brought the Republic to ruin." On the other this: "Dioclesian, &c. for having adopted Galerius in the East, for having every where abolished the superstition of Christ, for having extended the worship of the gods." And to name only one

more evidence, the cruelty must have been egregious, which could have induced the persecutors to strike the medal of Dioclesian, which still remains, with this inscription, "The name of Christians being extinguished."*

Supported by such authorities against the unreasonableness of modern scepticism, we may proceed in the detail of facts. There were some ministers of the palace of the highest rank and nobility, who were yet found to prefer the reproach of Christ to all worldly grandeur. The martyrdom of Peter, one of the emperor's household, is very remarkable. He was brought before the emperor in Nicomedia, and was scourged with excessive severity. As he refused to sacrifice, though his bones were made bare by the stripes, a mixture of vinegar and salt was poured on his limbs; and this being still to no purpose, he was gradually burnt to death. Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and many others, who served in the palace, after a variety of sufferings, were strangled. Anthimus, the bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded, and with him a great multitude of martyrs suffered. Men and women leaped on the funeral piles with alacrity: With the persecution the spirit of martyrdom was revived in the church. In every place the prisons were filled with bishops and other Christian ministers, and no room was reserved for felons. Martyrs were put to death in every province. Africa and Mauritania, Thebais, and Egypt throughout, abounded with them. Five persons of this last country Eusebius speaks of, whom he had known in Palestine and Phœnicia. He himself saw them suffering under the scourge, or exposed to enraged wild beasts, and celebrates their admirable patience. One of them, scarcely twenty years of age, stood without bonds, with his hands stretched out in a praying posture, exposed to bears and leopards, which were backward to perform the bloody task assigned them. A bull which had been stimulated by hot iron applied to him, tossed with his horns and tore his employers; and it was with some difficulty that beasts were found to execute the purposes of the persecution.

Egypt suffered extremely. Whole families were put to various kinds of death; some by fire, others by water, others by

* Let not the reader startle, because I ascribe the persecutions of the Church to Satanic influence. The following Scriptures carefully compared together, seem abundantly to warrant such a sentiment. John viii. 38-44. 1 Thes. ii. 18. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. 1 John iii. 8-13. Revel. throughout. To these the evangelical reader may easily add many more. Moreover, as the description of the influences of the Holy Spirit form an essential part of this History, it seems to fall in with my plan, to bring into view from time to time, the counterpart of the said influences, which is undoubtedly the agency of Satan.

* *Nomine Christianorum deleta.* See Bullet's Establishment, &c. EUSÆB. B. VIII.

Persecu-
tions in
Egypt.

decollation, after horrible tortures. Some perished by famine, others by crucifixion, and of these, some in the common manner, others were fastened with their heads downward, and preserved alive, that they might die by hunger. But the torments in Thebais exceed all description. Women tied by one foot, were raised up on high, and exposed naked, monuments at once of the inhumanity and indecency of the persecution. Others were torn by the distorted boughs of trees; and these scenes continued some years. Sometimes ten, at other times thirty, and sixty, and once a hundred men and women with their little ones, in one day, were murdered by various torments.

Our author himself, while in Egypt, saw many executed* in one day, some beheaded, others burnt; so that both the executioners were quite fatigued, and their weapons were blunted. The Christians suffered (he speaks what he saw himself) with the greatest faith and patience. There was even the strongest appearance of joy and triumph among them, and to their last breath they employed themselves in psalms and thanksgiving. Philoromus, a person of great dignity at Alexandria, and a man of wealth and eloquence, is recorded as one, who died cheerfully for Christ at this time. Philæas also, bishop of the Thmutive, a man of eminence in his country, suffered in Thebais. In vain did relations, friends, magistrates, even the judge himself, exhort them to pity themselves, their wives and children. They loved Christ above all, and were beheaded.†

* Euseb. B. IX. C. VIII.

† Philæas being asked, How he was persuaded that Jesus Christ was God? replied, He made the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, cleansed the lepers, and raised the dead. Being asked, Is a crucified person God? he answered, He was crucified for our salvation. The Governor said, You are rich, and able to maintain almost all the province, I spare you, and advise you to recede. It seems the liberality of Philæas was great toward the poor. The Governor added, The poor wife looks on thee. Philæas answered, Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all our spirits, he hath called me to the inheritance of his glory, and he may also call her to it. A little before his execution, My dear children, said he, ye that seek God, watch over your hearts. My dear children, stick fast to the precepts of Jesus Christ.—*Acta Sincera. Fleury.*

Undoubtedly these scenes demonstrate in the highest manner the strength of grace, and the reality of that divine influence which attended Christians. And when I see Mr. Gibbon, in his notes toward the conclusion of his first volume, quibbling and cavilling against the text of Eusebius, though any reader of Plutarch could have told him that the Greek word *εὐχρηστος*, signifies we saw, and the still plainer word *εὐαγγελος* leaves no room for doubt, methinks I see Stephen in the glory of his martyrdom, and the Jews gnashing upon him with their teeth.

Philæas, some time before his own martyrdom, being at Alexandria in prison, wrote an epistle to the Thmutive, his own church, concerning the sufferings of the Christians there. A fragment of which, Eusebius has preserved to us, which may not only illustrate the nature of the persecution, but also the spirit and views of the writer and other good men of that time. "The martyrs fixing sincerely the eye of their mind on the supreme God, and cheerfully embracing death for the sake of godliness, held immoveably their calling, knowing that our Lord Jesus Christ was made man for us, that he might cut down all sin, and might afford us the necessary preparatives for an entrance into eternal life." (He then quotes the well-known passage concerning the proper Deity and humiliation of Christ, in the second chapter to the Philippians.) Corseting the best gifts, the martyrs, who carried Christ within, underwent all sorts of tortures once and again. And while the guards insulted them in word and deed, they were preserved serene and unbroken in spirit, because "perfect love casteth out fear." But what eloquence can do justice to their fortitude! Free leave was given to any to injure them; some beat them with clubs, others with rods; some scourged them with thongs of leather, others with ropes. Some, having their hands behind them, were hung about a wooden engine, and every limb of their bodies was distended by certain machines. The torturers rent their whole bodies with iron nails, which were applied, not only to the sides, as in the case of murderers, but also to their bellies, their legs, and their cheeks; others were suspended by one hand to a portico, and underwent the most severe distention of all their joints; others were bound to

Epistle of
the martyr
Philæas.

pillars, face to face, their feet being raised above ground, that their bonds being distended by the weight of their bodies, might be the closer drawn together, and thus they endured almost a whole day without intermission.—The Governor ordered them to be bound with the greatest severity, and when they breathed their last, to be dragged on the ground. No care, said he, ought to be taken of these Christians; let all treat them as unworthy of the name of men. Some, after they had been scourged, lay in the stocks, both their feet being stretched to the fourth hole; so that they were obliged to lie with their faces upward, unable to stand on account of the wounds caused by the stripes. Some expired under their tortures. Others having been recovered by methods taken to heal them, and being reduced to the alternative of sacrificing or dying, cheerfully preferred the latter. For they knew what was written, “Whosoever sacrificeth to other gods, shall be destroyed,” and “Thou shalt have none other gods but me.”

Such, says Eusebius, are the words of a martyr, a true lover of wisdom and of God, which, before the definitive sentence of his execution, he sent to the brethren of his own Church.

One city in Phrygia, being generally Christian, was besieged by armed men, and set on fire. The men with their wives and children were burnt to death, calling upon Christ, the God over all.* All the inhabitants, magistrates and people, nobles and plebeians, professing Christianity, were ordered to sacrifice, and for refusing suffered in this manner.†

One Adaeuctus, a Christian, of the highest dignity, who held at that time an office of great importance, was honoured

also with the crown of martyrdom. Some were slain by axes, as in Arabia; some by breaking the legs, as in Cappadocia; some suspended by the feet, with the head downward, over a slow fire, were suffocated, as in Mesopotamia;

some were mutilated, and cut in pieces, as at Alexandria. Some were burnt to death, in a very gradual manner, at Antioch. Some, to avoid falling into the hands of their enemies, committed suicide, by throwing themselves down from the tops of houses: lamentable instances of impatience! But the reader will remember, that the decline had been very great from Christian purity: that so many should suffer like Christians in so dull a time, can scarcely be accounted for, but on the idea of the Lord's reviving his work and ministering the Holy Spirit amidst their afflictions. I cannot commend the conduct of a lady of Antioch, or that of her two daughters, who, to avoid the licentious brutality of the soldiers, drowned themselves. Two other virgins in the same city of Antioch, persons of quality, and of great piety, died in a much more Christian manner, being thrown into the sea by the persecutors.

In Pontus, sharp reeds were thrust under the nails into the fingers of some; the backs of others were scorched by melted lead; some in their bowels and privy parts suffered inexpressible torments: the judges exercising ingenious malice in the daily invention of new punishments.

Wearied at length with murder, and affecting to praise the clemency of the emperors, who were desirous to save life, they contented themselves with plucking out eyes, and cutting off one of the legs. The number of those who suffered in this way was inexpressible; and they were afterwards condemned to work in the mines.

Lucian, a holy and exemplary presbyter of Antioch, had the honour to apologise for Christianity at Nicomedia, in the presence of the emperor, and afterwards to suffer. Tyrannio, bishop of Tyre, was thrown into the sea. Zenobius, a presbyter of Sidon, and an excellent physician, expired serene in tortures. Sylvanus, bishop of Emesa, with some others, was exposed to the wild beasts. Peleus and Nilus, Egyptian bishops, with others were burnt to death. Peter, bishop of Alexandria, suffered also together with Faustus, Dios, and Ammonius, his presbyters. Other Egyptian bishops are mentioned also by Eusebius, who leaves the celebration of the rest to those who saw their sufferings, contenting himself with a more particular account of those whom he knew, and of

Lucian
suffered
Martyr-
dom,
A. D. 312.

* Gibbon observes, that there was an important circumstance, which has been noticed by Rufinus, the Latin translator of Eusebius; that the gates were opened to permit them to depart, if they pleased. The remark is worthy of his own malignity. Is it to be supposed, that this permission was unconditional? Eusebius tells us, that it was expected from them, that they should sacrifice.

† Euseb. B. VIII. C. XI.

those facts of which he had ocular demonstration.

As infidel writers have taken pains to depreciate the authenticity of these facts, it seemed proper to give the reader a just picture of them from Eusebius, and to submit to his determination, whether there be any internal evidences of falsehood in his narrative. In addition to what has been shown already from Lactantius, and ancient memorials, it may with justice be said, in favour of the credibility of the writer, whose character as a historian of veracity is before us, that he is large and circumstantial in scenes of which he was a spectator; succinct and general, where he had no opportunity of knowing the circumstances. Of the martyrs of Palestine, his own country, he has given us a copious narrative, a specimen of which must now be delivered, containing those whose martyrdom fell within the period of Dioclesian's reign. The rest must be considered hereafter. Præscipus was the first of these martyrs, who being brought before the tribunal, and ordered to sacrifice to the gods, declared that he knew only one God, to whom he ought to sacrifice in the manner which he has appointed. Being then ordered to make libations to the four emperors, he repeated a verse of Homer, which by no means pleased the persecutors, as implying a censure of the present government.* Upon this, he was beheaded immediately. Whether the empire was benefited by the appointment of four emperors instead of one, is a question of politics, which it certainly became not the martyr to enter upon, especially on that occasion. And it is the only instance of deviation into secular matters, which I remember to have seen in primitive Christians as yet. It might be only a rally of impudent vivacity, but even so it was extremely ill-timed. Galerius, in whose dominions he said this, would probably hear of it; and this forecast of all the persecutors, needed not the addition of such an incentive, to inflame his wrath against the Christians.

After him, in the same city, Casarea of Palestine, very many bishops of the neighbouring churches, suffered grievous torments: others through fear recanted at the first onset. The rest underwent a variety of punishments. Yet some pains

were taken to save the reputation of the gods, and to preserve the lives of Christians at the same time.

One was dismissed, as if he had sacrificed, though he was dragged to the altar, and a sacrifice was put into his hand by violence. Another went away in silence, some persons, with a humane falsehood, testifying that he had complied. One was thrown out as dead, after he had been tortured, though yet alive. Another protesting against what was exacted of him, many beating him in the mouth, with a view to compel him to silence, was thrust out of the court. Alpheus and Zachæus alone of all these bishops of Palestine, suffered death at this time. Tortured for twenty-four hours, after having undergone excessive severities before, they manfully confessed one only God, and one only Saviour Christ, and were at last beheaded.

On the same day at Antioch, Romanus, a deacon of the Church of Casarea, was martyred. Happening to enter Antioch at the very time when the churches were demolished, he saw many men and women with their little ones, crowding to the temples and sacrifices, most

Martyrdom of Romanus.

probably Christian apostates.* The same spirit which moved Mattathias, the father of the Maccabees, on a like occasion, was felt by Romanus, but exerted in a manner more agreeable to the Christian dispensation. He cried aloud and rebuked their cowardice and perfidy. But being seized immediately, and condemned to the flames, and fastened to the stake, while the executioners expected the definitive order from the emperor then present, (Galerius most probably) he asked cheerfully, Where is the fire for me? Caesar, provoked at his boldness, ordered his tongue to be cut out. He put out his tongue with great readiness. After this punishment he was thrown into prison, and suffered there a considerable time. His feet were exposed to an unnatural distention, and in the end he was dismissed out of life by strangling. This happened during the first year of the persecution, while it raged only against the governors of the church.

In the second year, when the persecution grew hotter, imperial letters were

* Οὐδὲν ἄλλοθεν ὑποκρίσιντες, οὐκ ἔσπευον ἄλλῃ ἐκείνῃ βαρβαρίᾳ.

* So a discourse of Eusebius on the Resurrection teaches us. See II. on the Martyrs of Palestine, C. II. Valerius in the notes.

sent into Palestine, commanding all men, without exception, to sacrifice. At Gaza, Timotheus, after many sufferings, was consumed by a slow fire; Agapius and Thecla were condemned to the wild beasts. At this time, when many apostatized to save their lives, there wanted not also some instances of an excessive forwardness. Six persons at Cesarea, with their hands bound, ran to Urbanus the Judge, and offered themselves for martyrdom. They suffered in conjunction with two others, whose spirit and circumstances in the manner of their departure out of life, were more conformable to the rules of the Gospel.

Power being now communicated to the governors of the different provinces to punish the Christians freely, each exercised it, as his particular temper dictated. Some, for fear of displeasing, did even more than they were ordered. Some felt the impulse of their own enmity against godliness; others indulged a natural savageness of disposition: there were who saw, that to shed blood profusely, was the high road to preferment. There were those, (and Lactantius* looks on them as of the worst sort), who determined to torment, and not to kill. Such persons studied those arts of torture, which might keep life still in being amidst the keenest sensations of pain. Eusebius tells us, that he himself heard some of this sort boasting, that their administration was not polluted with blood, and that he saw a Bithynian governor exulting, as if he had subdued a nation of Barbarians, because one person, after two years' resistance, had yielded to the force of torments. Much pains were taken also with the tortured, to recover them, that they might be strengthened to endure new punishments. A considerable part of Roman jurisprudence was now employed on this subject. The constitutions of the law on this head had been published and commented on by the famous lawyer Ulpian, and were considered as serious objects of study by civilians.

At no time since the beginning of Christianity, was so systematical and so laboured an effort made to extinguish the Gospel of Christ. Satan had great wrath, as if he had foreseen that he should have but short time; and when we consider how poorly provided the Church was for this fiercest of all the invasions she had

ever met with, we shall see cause to admire the grace of God, who yet furnished out a noble army of martyrs in a time of so great Evangelical declension; and in the end, more effectually than ever, baffled the designs of Satan.

In addition to other methods of persecution, the powers of genius and the arts of eloquence were introduced. Cyprian alone of the Latin writers was capable of pleasing the taste of the learned among the Pagans. A certain person of taste among them was heard by Lactantius, to call him Coprianus,* because he employed an elegant genius, adapted to better things, in the support of old wives' fables. In so contemptible a light did the Gospel appear to the learned of that day, even when clothed in the dress of the eloquent Cyprian! but how much more contemptible in the hands of the generality of Christian teachers, who were destitute of the powers of argument and of language.

Encouraged by the favour of the emperors, and the apparently ruined state of Christendom, at the very time when the persecution raged in Bithynia, two writers appeared who insulted the Christians. One, whose name Lactantius does not give us, was a philosopher, and like many preachers of morality in all ages, a defender of virtue, and a practitioner of vice, a flatterer of the court, very rich, and very corrupt, one who condemned his own practice by his moral writings, and who dealt largely in the praises of the emperors, on account of their great piety in supporting the religion of the gods. Yet all men condemned his meanness in choosing that time particularly to write against Christians, nor did he obtain the favour at court which he expected.

The other writer, Hierocles, was doubtless a man of parts and talents. He was a virulent enemy of the Gospel, had great influence in promoting the persecution; and from being a judge in Nicomedia was promoted to the government of Alexandria. He attempted to compare the feigned miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus with those of Jesus Christ. This man wrote with an air of candour and humanity to the Christians, while his actions against them were fierce and bloody.

In France alone, and its neighbourhood, the people of God found some shelter.

* B. V. C. 11.

* Lactan. B. V. 1, 2. The allusion is to *copra*, dung.

Yet was the mild Constantius, to save appearances with his superior Maximian, induced to persecute, not only by destroying the temples, as was mentioned, but also by dismissing those of his own household who would not renounce Christianity. The Christians of his family were tried by such means. But the event was contrary to their expectations.

Constantius retained the faithful, and dismissed the apostates, judging that those who were unfaithful to their God would also be disloyal to their prince.

At Orla in Numidia, Paul, the bishop, ordered a sub-deacon to deliver up the treasures of the church to a Roman officer. The Holy Scriptures and the moveables of this society of Christians were surrendered by the perfidy or cowardice of those who ought to have protected them. But God reserved some, who were endowed with courage and zeal, at the hazard of their lives, to take care of the sacred writing, and baffle the intention of the persecutors, which doubtless was to destroy all records of Christianity among men. Felix of Tibiura, in Africa, being asked to deliver up the Scriptures, answered, I have them, but will not part with them. He was condemned to be beheaded. "I thank thee, O Lord," says this honest martyr, "that I have lived fifty-six years, have kept my virginity, have preserved the Gospel, and have preached faith and truth. O my Lord Jesus Christ, the God of heaven and earth, I bow my head to be sacrificed to thee, who livest to all eternity." I judge it not amiss to distinguish this man in the narrative. The preservation of civil liberty is valuable, and the names of men who have suffered for it with integrity are recorded with honour. But how much below the name of Felix of Tibiura should those be accounted! He is one of those heroes who have preserved to us the precious word of God itself. In Abitina, in Africa, forty-nine manfully perished through hunger and ill treatment. In Sicily,* Euphros a martyr being asked, "Why do you keep the Scriptures, forbidden by the emperors?" answered, "Because I am a Christian. Life eternal is in them; he that gives them up loses life eternal." Let his name be remembered with honour, together with that of Felix. He suffered also in the same cause. Various martyrs suffered in Italy. For Max-

imian was to the full as much disposed to persecute as Dioclesian.

In the year 304 or 305, a civil change took place in the empire, which paved the way for very important changes in the Church, though the persecution continued still for some time. Dioclesian resigned the empire, and Maximian followed his example, though with no great cordiality. They were succeeded by Galerius in the East, (who ruled in the room of Dioclesian, and put Maximian his nephew, in his own place,) and in the West by Constantian.

Maximian inherited the savageness and the prejudices of his uncle; and in Palestine and in the more eastern parts, over which Galerius had ruled, he still continued the horrors of the persecution. Let us now attend to the remaining part of Eusebius's account of the martyrs of Palestine, who suffered under the authority of this tyrant at different times.

Apphian, a young person under twenty, who had received a very polite education at Berytus, and could not bear to live with his father and relations at Pagan in Lycia, because of their aversion to the Gospel, left all his secular emoluments and hopes for the love of Christ, and came to Casarea; where he was so transported with zeal as to run up to Urbanus the governor then making a libation, to seize him by the right hand, to stop his religious employment, and exhort him to forsake idolatry and turn to the true God. The consequence was, what might be expected in the natural course of things. He was arrested, ordered to sacrifice; and after he had sustained most dreadful tortures by fire and otherwise, which Eusebius* describes with an exactness of detail that needs not be repeated, he was thrown into the sea. His imprudence was great, and his zeal very irregular and extravagant; but who will not admire the sincerity of that love of Christ, which carried this ardent youth through all hardships: who would not prefer his disposition, with all his faults, to the cowardice and love of the world, which in our times prevent such numbers from daring to show true regard for the divine Saviour?

This Apphian had a brother called

* *Aeta Sincera. Fleury.*

* C. IV.

Resignation of
Dioclesian
A. D.
304 or 305.

Martyrdom of
Apphian.

Ædesius, who had advanced farther in the philosophical studies than himself, and who likewise embraced the faith of Christ. Prisons, bonds, and the drudgery of the mines of Palestine, he endured with great patience and fortitude; at length he came to Alexandria, and there saw the judge raging with frantic fury against Christians, treating the men with various abuses, and giving up chaste virgins, who had devoted themselves to a single life, to pimps to be treated in the vilest manner. Fired at the sight, he lost all patience, rebuked the magistrate, and struck him. Upon which he was exposed to a variety of torture, and thrown into the sea. He seems to have possessed both the excellencies and the faults of his brother. It is proper to add,* that the inhuman magistrate was no other than the philosophical *Hierocles*, whose affected humanity and candour we have celebrated above. A remark or two may be proper in this place, before we proceed.

1. The persecution we are reviewing found the Church in the lowest state of Christian wisdom and piety. In addition to what I have said† on the ungenerous remarks of Mr. Gibbon, concerning the behaviour of *Ædesius*, it should be observed, that amidst the great dearth of instruction in which he had learned Christianity, it is not to be wondered at that he should know his duty so imperfectly. I compare the piety of him and of *Apphian* to that of *Jephthah* and of *Sampson*; sincere, but irregular and injudicious. They lived under similar circumstances, in times of great ignorance. The Spirit of God, when he creates a new heart, and a new spirit, and furnishes a man with dispositions for obedience, supersedes not the use of pastoral instruction. Where this is much wanted, even divine love itself, though strong, is blind, comparatively speaking, and will mistake the rule of duty continually. It is in vain that I look out in all this period for judicious and discreet pastors, and for clear evangelical views. No *Cyprian* or *Dionysius* now appeared to check, to regulate, to control the spirits of Christians, and to discipline them by Scripture rules. The persecution found vast numbers perfidious and cowardly; some chosen spirits, humble and faithful to death, but of these many, it is to be feared, poorly in-

formed of their duty both to God and man, and mixing with the love of Christ the intemperance and precipitation of blind self-will. The best use to be made of this observation, after teaching us to be candid to the faults of these good men, is this, that those who enjoy the advantage of better instruction and of wise pastors, should thankfully improve their privileges, and not by the want of just subordination deprive themselves of the opportunity of exhibiting more regular and edifying examples of holiness. That knowledge was thus low among Christians, is evident from *Eusebius*, one of the most learned of those times, who extols a conduct in these brethren, which every Christian of common light and capacity now would condemn.

2. I see also the prevalence both of the monastic and of the philosophic spirit. Devotees were increasing in numbers among serious persons; and Origenism had made philosophy more and more reputable. Under this influence, the two brothers, whose story we have seen, imbibed too much of Platonism, knew too little of Christianity, and though sincere enough to become martyrs for Christ, attained not the praise of Christian simplicity. The doctrines of Christ had ceased to be explicitly unfolded; and it was in sufferings chiefly, endured with patient faith and cheerful hope, that we can now see, that Christ had yet a church in the world. The bush was burning indeed in a fire the most dreadful, yet it was not consumed.

In the fourth year of the persecution happened the martyrdom of *Agapius* at *Cæsarea*. *Maximin Cæsar* was there exhibiting spectacles in honour of his birthday. The ferociousness of pagans was doubtless much augmented by the usual barbarous sports; and the native enmity of the mind against godliness met not with so many checks of humanity, in times of persecution, as it would in our days of civilization. But it should be remembered, that it was not philosophy, but the Gospel, which improved, in this as well as other respects, the morality of the Roman empire. *Agapius*, who had been thrice before brought on the stage, and had thrice been respite by the compassion of the judge, was now brought before the emperor, to fulfil, says *Eusebius*, that word of Christ, "ye shall be brought before kings for my name's sake."

Martyrdom of
Agapius.

* See *Valesius's* notes on *Euseb.*

† *Milner's* Remarks on *Gibbon*.

A slave who had murdered his master was produced at the same time, and condemned to the wild beasts. The emperor, with a view to distinguish his birthday by an act of generosity, both pardoned and gave freedom to the murderer. The whole amphitheatre rang with acclamations in praise of his clemency. But it was perfectly to act in character for Maximin to punish the innocent and to spare the guilty. He asked Agapius if he would renounce Christianity, promising him liberty on that condition. The martyr expressed his cheerful readiness to undergo any punishment, not for any crime committed by him, but for piety toward the Lord of the universe. He was condemned to be torn by a bear, and still breathing, was carried back to prison; where after he had lived a day, he was sunk in the sea with weights fastened to his feet. The exclamation of the Jews, in the history of our Saviour, "Not this man, but Barabbas," naturally occurs to Eusebius on this occasion.

In the fifth year of the persecution, a Tyrian virgin, Theodosia, not quite eighteen years old, was put to death for owning and countenancing some Christian prisoners. The judge, Urbanus, afterwards condemned them to the mines of Palestine. Silvanus a presbyter, afterwards a bishop, with some others, was doomed to the labour of the brass mines, the joints of their feet being first weakened by the application of hot iron.

Few persecutors exceeded Urbanus in malice and activity. He doomed three to fight with one another; Auxentius, a venerable old saint, he condemned to the beasts. Some of them he condemned to the mines, after he had made them eunuchs. Others, after bitter torments, he threw into prison again.

If any be still inclined to regard the calculation of those, who represent the number of the martyrs as small, let him consider, that it was evidently very much the policy of this, and most probably of the former persecutions, to torment Christians without destroying them. The emperors did not wish to rob themselves of such a number of subjects, but to subdue them to their will. Yet in many instances the human frame must have sunk under those hardships; and the multitude of Christian sufferers on this account, in addition to the evils of poverty and flight, must exceed all powers of calculation.

Urbanus tortured, among others, the famous Pamphilus, the friend of Eusebius; but lived not to see his martyrdom. Being himself convicted of crimes, Urbanus was capitally punished in Caesarea, the scene of his cruelties, and by the same Maximin, of whose imperial savageness he had been the minister.

In the sixth year of the persecution, of the great multitude of Christian sufferers in Thebais, near a hundred were selected to be sent to Palestine, and were adjudged by Firmilian, the successor of Urbanus, to be lamed in the left foot, and to lose the right eye, and in that state to be condemned to the mines. The three persons also, who had been condemned to fight with one another, for refusing to learn the new business of a gladiator imposed on them, were doomed by Maximin himself, with some others, to the same punishments as the persons transported from Thebais. Some persons were apprehended at Gaza for meeting together to hear the Scripture read, and were punished with the loss of a limb, and an eye, or in a still more cruel manner. Two women, after sustaining horrible torments, were put to death. The former being menaced with the loss of chastity, burst out into expressions of indignation against the tyrant Maximin, for employing such judges. The latter being dragged by force to an altar, threw it down. What was said before of Adesius and Apphian may be applied to these. But there were Christians of a higher class, better informed in their duty, and more possessed of the mind of Christ. A person, named Paul, being sentenced to lose his head, begged to be allowed a short space of time. His request being granted, he prayed with a loud voice for the whole Christian world, that God would forgive them, remove the present heavy scourge of their iniquities, and restore them to peace and liberty: he then prayed for the Jews, that they might come to God and find access to him through Christ. In the next place, he prayed that the same blessings might be vouchsafed to the Samaritans. The Gentiles, who lived in error and in ignorance of God, were the next objects of his charitable petitions, that they might be brought to know God and to serve him: nor did he omit to mention the crowd about him, the judge who had sentenced him, the emperor, and the executioner, and in the hearing

Also of
Theodo-
sia.

Cruel per-
secutions.

of all he prayed that their sins might not be laid to their charge. The whole company was moved, and tears were shed. The martyr composed himself to suffer, and offering his neck to the sword, he was beheaded: An admirable Christian hero! in whom divine love breathed in conjunction with resignation and serenity. The Lord's hand was not shortened: His grace appeared in him in a manner worthy of the Apostolic age. Soon after a hundred and thirty Egyptian chieftains, suffering the same mutilations which have been mentioned above, were sentenced by Maximian to the mines of Palestine and Cilicia.

After the persecution had paused some time, it was renewed with fresh violence

by the Edicts of Maximin.*
 Edicts of Maximin. The temples were repaired; men were compelled to sacrifice every where; all things sold in the markets were polluted with libations; and persons were placed at the public baths to force men to idolatrous compliances. Three believers, Antoninus, Zebinus, and Germanus, threw themselves into the hands of Firmilian, and were capitally punished. Eusebius, in his usual manner, commends their over-forward zeal. With them a virgin called Ennathus was dragged by violence to the judge, whipped, and burned to death. Their bodies were left exposed to the beasts of prey, and particular care was taken to prevent their interment. Sometime after, certain Egyptians, coming to minister to the confessors of their own country, who had been condemned to the mines in Cilicia, one of them was burned, two were beheaded, and several were associated with the confessors in their afflictions, mutilation, and the drudgery of the mines. Peter the monk, having in vain been solicited by the judge to save his life, gave it up cheerfully for the sake of Christ. With him suffered Asclepius, bishop of the Marcionites, being burned on the same funeral pile, "animated with zeal," says my author, "but not according to knowledge."† This however might be more than Eusebius knew. The heretical form, in which he appeared, might be consistent with the pure love of Christ; in a history, which undertakes impartially to celebrate the people of God, it does not become us to be blinded by the idea of a rigorous and exclusive uniformity of denomination.

* C. IX. de Martyr. Pal.

† C. X.

Pamphilus the presbyter and friend of Eusebius, is highly commended by him for his contempt of secular grandeur, to which he might have aspired; for his great liberality to the poor; for that which may seem more likely to cloud than to adorn his Christian excellencies, his philosophic life; above all, for his knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, in which his panegyrist thinks he excelled all men of that time; and for his benevolence to all who came to him. An excellent Christian he undoubtedly was, though a moderate degree of Evangelical knowledge in that age would easily be esteemed prodigious. Firmilian asking him when brought before him, what was his country, received for answer, "Jerusalem." Not understanding what he meant by this, he tortured him for an explanation. Pamphilus persisted that he had spoken truth. "Where is this country of yours?" "It belongs to those who alone worship the true God." The judge, at once incensed and perplexed, after various torments, ordered him to be beheaded. Twelve martyrs suffered with him. One of them, Porphyrius, a servant of Pamphilus, begging the favour of interment for the deceased, was ordered to be burned; and was heard for the last time when the flame began to reach him, calling upon Jesus the Son of God as his helper. It is remarkable, that Firmilian also himself, after having trodden in the steps of Urbanus in shedding Christian blood, like him also suffered capitally by the sentence of the emperor.

Toward the end of the seventh year the persecution relaxing in some degree, the multitude of the confessors in the mines of Palestine enjoyed some liberty, and even erected some places of public worship. The president of the province coming among them, envied them the small cessation of their miseries, and wrote to the emperor in their prejudice. Afterwards the master of the mines coming thither, as if by an imperial rescript, divided the sufferers into classes. Some he ordered to dwell in Cyprus, others in Libanus; the rest he dispersed and harassed with various drudgeries in different parts of Palestine. Four he singled out for the examination of the military commander, who burnt them to death. Silvanus, a bishop of great piety, John, an Egyptian, and thirty-seven others, were the same day beheaded by the order of Maximin.

Of John it is remarked, that though blind, he had been, like the rest, cauterized and debilitated in one leg by a hot iron. The strength of his memory was admitted among the Christians: he could at pleasure repeat from the Old or New Testament many passages in Christian assemblies. But the fact proves something more than what Eusebius mentions, namely, that he had made the best use of his eyes while he was possessed of them.

And here we close the account from Eusebius, of the martyrs of Palestine. For eight years the East, with little intermission, groaned under the most heavy persecution. In the West, their sufferings abated after two years. The political changes of the empire account for the difference. But, both in the East and the West, Satan was permitted to exert his malice in the keenest manner during this last of the Pagan persecutions. And the Divine power and wisdom, in still preserving a real Church on earth, was never more conspicuously displayed, since the days of the Apostles. The time of an external triumph of the Church, under Constantine, was at hand. Those, who look at outward things alone, may be tempted to think how much more glorious would the Church have appeared at that time, without the previous desolations of Dioclesian's persecution. But when it is considered how much Christian doctrine had decayed, and how low holy practice had fallen, the necessity of so sharp a trial to purify the Church, and fit her at all for a state of prosperity, is evident. Otherwise, the difference between Christians and Pagans might possibly have been little more than a name.

I know it is common for authors to represent the great declension of Christianity to have taken place only after its external establishment under Constantine. But the evidence of history has compelled me to dissent from this view of things. In fact we have seen, that for a whole generation previous to the persecution, few marks of superior piety appeared. Scarcely a luminary of godliness existed; and it is not common in any age for a great work of the Spirit of God to be exhibited, but under the conduct of some remarkable Saints, Pastors, and Reformers. This whole period, as well as the whole scene of the persecution, is very barren of such characters. Not but that

many precious children of God suffered in much patience and charity. But those who suffered with very much of a different spirit found no pastor to discountenance their self-will and false zeal; a sure sign that the true spirit of martyrdom was less pure than it had formerly been. Moreover, the prevalence of superstition on the one hand, and the decay of Evangelical knowledge on the other, are equally apparent. Christ crucified, justification purely by faith, and the effectual influences of the Holy Ghost, together with humbling views of man's total apostasy and corruption, these were ideas at least very faintly impressed at that day on Christian minds. It is vain to expect Christian faith to abound without Christian doctrine. Moral, and philosophical, and monastical instructions, will not effect for men what is to be expected from Evangelical doctrine. And if the faith of Christ was so much declined, (and its decayed state ought to be dated from about the year 270), we need

not wonder that such scenes as Eusebius hints at without any circumstantial details, took place in the Christian world.* He observes, that

pastors of Churches were condemned to take care of camels, and to feed the emperor's horses. Even he, who was far from seeing in a due light the cause of the declension of piety in their departure from the faith, was struck with the moral effects, and could not but revere the Divine justice, in giving unworthy ministers a punishment adapted to their crimes. He speaks also of the ambitious spirit of many, in aspiring to the offices of the Church, the ill-judged and unlawful ordinations, the quarrels among confessors themselves, and the contentions excited by young demagogues in the very robes of the persecuted Church, and the multiplied evils which their vices excited among Christians. How sadly must the Christian world have declined, which could thus conduct itself under the very rod of Divine vengeance! Yet let not the infidel or profane world triumph. It was not Christianity, but the departure from it, which brought on these evils; and even in this low state of the Church there was much more moral virtue than could be found any where else; and the charitable spirit of many in suffering,

Decay of
pure
Christian-
ity.

A. D. 270.

* C. XII. Martyr. of Pal.

showed that God had yet a Church upon earth. The reader is however now prepared to conceive aright of the state of the Church, when Constantine took it under his protection, and to judge how far a national establishment was beneficial or prejudicial to it in future. Of this he could scarcely judge with any propriety, unless well informed of its previous spiritual condition. But before we enter upon this, some facts, more or less connected with the persecution, with the civil state of the Empire, so far as it may throw light on the history of the Church, and with the manner how the persecution closed, will call for our attention.

Of all the martyrologies of this persecution, none are more replete with horror than those which describe the sufferings of Taracus, Probus, and Andronicus, at Tarsus in Cilicia.

But I suppose by this time, the reader has seen a sufficient specimen of scenes which admit of no entertainment, no colouring, no embellishment. One of the best lessons to be learnt from them is, that here human nature is discovered in the height of its enmity against God: and any man may see of what malignity he is capable, if left at large to his own dark designs. I looked over the acts of these martyrdoms, which are rather tedious;* I suppose Mr. Gibbon also did the same, and his remark on what he had read, is this, that there was an asperity of behaviour in the martyrs, which might irritate the magistrates. But are words to be compared to deeds? What if torments so terrible, so unprovoked, inflicted on innocent and worthy citizens, did extort a few passionate complaints and indignant speeches? This was the case I see with Andronicus, and it is the only thing blameworthy which appears on the face of the narrative: Is this an apology, or even an extenuation for such barbarous persecutions? Taracus firmly owned the truth. On being asked, whether he did not worship two gods, because he worshipped Christ, he confessed that "Christ was God, being the Son of the living God; he is the hope of Christians; he saves us by his sufferings." Probus, on being required to sacrifice to Jupiter, says, "What to him who married his sister, that adulterer, that unchaste person, as all the poets

testify!" In such testimonies as these, truth was delivered without violation of decorum. It was not so in the whole of these scenes. But enmity knows not what candour means; and lest such bigots to infidelity as Mr. Gibbon should misconstrue what I have said of the great decline of godliness in the Christians of these times, it ought in justice to be owned in their favour, that a persecution, which intended their total destruction, was carried on against a race of men, who were even then, with all their faults, the most loyal, peaceable, and worthy citizens in the whole Empire.

But Providence was raising up a Protector for the Church. The emperor Constantius lying at the point of death, desired his partner in the East, Galerius, to send him home his son Constantine. The Eastern emperor, having delayed as long as possible, sent him at last, and the son arrived in Britain just in time to see his father alive, who was interred at Eboracum.*

Constantine succeeding, gave the most perfect toleration to Christians, through the whole extent of his dominions. Providence was still with him in enlarging his kingdom, that, like another Cyrus, he might give peace and liberty to the Church. Rome and Italy were for sometime under the power of Maxentius, the son of Dioclesian's colleague Maximian. This prince attempted the chastity of a Roman matron, who by suicide prevented his base designs. Had she been a Pagan, as Lucretia, her impatience under the hand of God was not to be wondered at; but she professed Christianity; yet her action is highly praised by Eusebius;—fresh proof of the taste of the times in religion. But Maxentius, though a tyrant of the basest character, never seems to have been, strictly speaking, a persecutor of the Christians. Constantine, however, at length coming from France into Italy, subverted his kingdom, and became sole master of the Western world. It was in his expedition against Maxentius that he is said to have seen the miracle of the Cross, the consideration of which will more properly excite our attention when we come to consider the religious character and proceedings of this emperor. Maximian also, whose daughter Constantine had married, after

Constantine the Great succeeds Constantine,
A. D. 306.

* See Fleury, B. IX.

* Now York.

various attempts to recover the power which, by the influence of Dioclesian, he had resigned, was put to death by his son-in-law for attempting his destruction.

Galerius himself in the year 310 was smitten with an incurable disease: all his lower parts were corrupted; physicians and idols were applied to in vain: an intolerable stench overspread itself over the palace of Sardis, where he resided: he was devoured by worms: and in a situation the most dreadful he continued a whole year. Softened

at length by his sufferings, he published, in the year 311, an Edict, by which he took off the persecution from the Christians, allowed them to rebuild their places of worship, and entreated them to pray for his health. Thus did God himself subdue this haughty tyrant. Prisons were opened, and among others Donatus, the friend of Lactantius,* who had been confined six years, recovered his liberty.

Galerius had exceeded all emperors in hostility to Christ; but who can fix the limit of human passions! His nephew Maximian, who reigned in a subordinate capacity in the East, was even superior in the arts of persecution. Paganism was expiring, and it behooved the prince of darkness to find or qualify an agent, who should dispute every inch of ground with persevering assiduity.

Maximin, equally unmoved by the example of Constantine on the one hand, and the extorted clemency of Galerius on the other, suppressed the Edict of the latter, and contented himself with giving verbal orders to stop the persecution. The pretorian prefect Sabinus, however, declared the will of the emperor in favour of toleration, which had all the effect his humanity wished. The prisoners were released, the confessions were freed from the mines, the highways were full of Christians, singing psalms and hymns to God, as they returned to their friends, and Christendom at length wore a cheerful aspect. Even Pagans were melted; and many who had joined in the attempt to extinguish the Christian name, began to be convinced, that a religion which had withstood such repeated and such formidable attacks, was divine and invincible.

But this calm lasted not six whole months.* Galerius, a few days after his edict, expired, his body being altogether corrupted. Without entering into a minute description of his sufferings, which are particularized by Eusebius and Lactantius, it is perfectly right to observe, that he who delighted so long to make men feel the most exquisite misery, might say at last with Adoni-bezek,† “As I have done, so God hath requited me.” Maximian attempted to succeed him in all his eastern dominions; but was prevented by Licinius, whom Galerius had nominated Augustus, who took possession of Asia Minor. But Syria and Egypt with their dependencies remained still under Maximian. Here he renewed the persecution with much malevolence and artifice. Under certain pretences, he forbade Christians to assemble in their church-yards, and then he privately procured petitions from various cities, which desired that the Christians might not be encouraged in their precincts. This was a refined species of policy, in which he was assisted by Theoctenus, the governor of Antioch. This man had hunted the Christians from their places of confinement, and had caused the deaths of many. He now set up an oracle of Jupiter, and consecrated the idol at Antioch with new ceremonies. Jupiter gave out, that the Christians ought to be banished from the city, and Maximian was informed, that it was his duty, both on motives of piety and policy, to persecute the Christians. All the other magistrates of the cities subject to Maximian, acted the same part as Theoctenus, and petitions were sent by the Pagan inhabitants begging the expulsion of Christians.

Maximin, furnished with plausible pretences for renewing the persecution, commenced it again. Through every city and village, idolatrous priests were appointed, and over them high-priests of a new institution, who applied themselves with great diligence to the support of declining paganism. They offered sacrifices with great assiduity. Persons of quality filled the highest offices of idolatry; and pains were taken to prevent Christians from building places of worship, or from following their religion in public or private; and the former method of compelling them to sacrifice was renewed. To render his new priests more respectable,

* De Mort. persecut.

• Pateb. B. IX. C. II, &c.

† Judges i. 7.

Maximin clothed them with white mantles, such as were worn by the ministers of the palace. Incited by the example of the tyrant, all the Pagans in his dominions exerted themselves to contrive the ruin of Christians; and human ingenuity was put to the stretch, to invent calumnies in support of the kingdom of darkness.

When falsehood and slanders are paid for by governments, they will not want employers.

Certain fictitious acts of Pilate and our Saviour, full of blasphemy, were, by Maximin's approbation, circulated through his dominions, with orders to facilitate the publication of them in all places, and to direct schoolmasters to deliver them to youth, that they might commit them to memory. A certain officer at Damascus also engaged some infamous women to confess, that they had been Christians, and privy to the lascivious practices which were committed on the Lord's day in their assemblies. These and other slanders were registered, copied, and sent to the emperor, as the authenticated confession of these women, and he circulated them through his dominions. The officer who invented this calumny, destroyed himself sometime after by his own hand. But a specious pretence was now given for augmenting the persecution. Maximin, affecting still the praise of clemency, gave orders to the prefects not to take away the lives of Christians, but to punish them with loss of eyes, and various amputations. The other abominations of this tyrant, dreadful and uncommon as they were, come not within our province. His labours against Christianity only belong to our subject. Nor did he strictly abstain from shedding blood at this season, though one would think the experience of so many years should have taught him, as well as the other tyrants, that the "blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church."

There appears, however, a plan of polite refinement in this renewed persecution, beyond anything which had yet been practised. Maximin did not now,

Cruelties
of Max-
imin.

as he had done formerly under Galerius, slay indiscriminately, or put to death numbers with exquisite torture.

A few bishops and persons of Christian renown were deprived of life, the rest were harassed by every other kind of suffering short of death, and no arts were

left unemployed to root Christianity out of the mind, and educate the next generation in a confirmed aversion to it. The decrees of cities against Christians, and besides these, the copies of imperial edicts engraved in brazen tables, were nailed up and seen in every town. Nothing like this had been done before. The persecution, in this its last stage, had arrived at the perfection of diabolical ingenuity. Children in their schools daily sounded Jesus and Pilate, and other things, invented to asperse the Gospel.

A rescript of the emperor's, nailed to a post at Tyre, manifests with what pleasure and joy he had received the petition of that city against the Christians. It venerates Jupiter and the rest of the gods, as the authors of all good; appeals to the experience of the inhabitants how happily their affairs had proceeded since the worship of the ancients had been restored, how they were now blest with good harvests, had no plagues, earthquakes and tempests, and enjoyed peace through the empire, and how opposite to all this the case had been, while Christendom prevailed. He desires that such as persisted still in their error should be banished from Tyre, according to the prayer of the petition. This rescript was a specimen of the rest, and it cannot be denied, that either Maximin, or some persons about him, were men of capacity, industry, and activity, though surely a worse cause was never found for the exertion of these talents.

Never were Christian minds so clouded and dispirited. Thus low did God suffer his Church to fall, to try its faith, and to purify it in the furnace. Art was more poisonous than rage, and the deceptions seemed calculated to impose (if it were possible) even on the elect. Very remarkable, however, was the Divine testimony to his Church; at this time, man's extremity was the opportunity in which the truth and goodness of God appeared most conspicuous. There were doubtless many true Christians at that time wrestling with their God, to appear for his Church, and he did so, in this manner. While the messengers were on the road with rescripts similar to that at Tyre, a drought commenced, famine unexpected oppressed the dominions of Maximin; then followed a plague with inflamed ulcers. The sores spread over the body, but chiefly affected the eyes and blinded many. And the Armenians, the allies

and neighbours of the Eastern empire, entered into a war with Maximin; they were disposed to favour the Gospel, and Maximin, by extending his persecution to them, drew on their hostility. Thus were the boasts of Maximin confounded. The plague and famine raged in the most dreadful manner, and multitudes lay unburied. The Christians, whose piety and fear of God were stirred up on this occasion, were the only persons who employed themselves in doing good, every day busying themselves in taking care of the sick, and burying the dead, whereas numbers of Pagans were neglected by their own friends; they gathered together also multitudes of the famished poor, and distributed bread to all; thus imitating their heavenly Father, who sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. Christians still appeared to be superior to all others; and the Church was known still to exist, by fruits peculiarly her own, to the praise of her God and Saviour.

Toward the end of the year 312, died the emperor Dioclesian, who had reigned prosperously for twenty years; in the latter

Death of
Dioclesian
A. D. 312

part of which time he commenced the persecution, and abdicating the throne not long after, he lived seven years a private life: happy, had he done so on motives of piety. But the mischiefs which his authority introduced continued under tyrants more ferocious than himself; and he lived not only to see these mischiefs, without power to check them, had he been so disposed, but also, what probably more afflicted his mind, to find his daughter Valeria, the widow of Galerius, and her mother, his own wife Prisca, treated with great injustice by his successors, and to solicit their release in vain. Worn out with grief and vexation, he ended his days at length, a monument of the instability of all human greatness. He lived not to see the catastrophe of his wife and daughter, who, after a long course of sufferings, were put to death by Licinius. It is foreign to the design of this history to particularize their story, which, after all, is very mysterious. Why they should be so much persecuted, first by Maximin and then by Licinius, we know not. A conjecture may be made, but it must be considered only as a conjecture. The two princesses had doubtless favoured the Gospel in the days of their grandeur, and had defiled themselves with sacrifices to appease Dioclesian.

Might they not afterwards suffer for the sake of the Gospel itself, though their persecutors might not choose to represent them as suffering on account of Christianity? If so, the princesses sustained the cross with more fidelity than formerly. Maximin was surely capable of all this inhumanity, and that Licinius also was so, though for some time a friend of Christians, will appear hereafter.

In the year 313, there was a war between Licinius and Maximin, who contended each for the complete sovereignty of the East. Before the decisive battle, Maximin vowed

A. D. 313.

to Jupiter, that if he obtained the victory, he would abolish the Christian name. Licinius, in a dream,* was directed to supplicate, with all his army, the supreme God, in a solemn manner. He gave directions to his soldiers to do so, and they prayed in the field of battle, using the very words which he had received in his dream. In all this the reader will see nothing suspicious, nothing but what is in its own nature very credible, when he considers that the contest between Jehovah and Jupiter was now at its height, and drawing to a crisis. Victory decided in favour of Licinius. Maximin, in consequence of this,† published a cautious decree, in which he forbade the molestation of Christians, but did not allow them the liberty of public worship. Warned by former experience of his enmity, the Christians in his dominions dared not to assemble themselves together. Whilst the rest of the Christian world, under the auspices of Constantine and Licinius, who published a complete toleration of Christianity, together with that of all other religions, enjoyed peace and tranquillity.

End of the
Xth persecution.

It was the will of God to lay his hand still more heavily on the tyrant. Struck with rage at his disappointments, in the sad reverse of his affairs he slew many priests and prophets of his gods, by whose enchantments he had been seduced with false hopes of universal empire in the East; and finding most probably that he gained no friends among Christians by his late edict, he published another in their favour as full and complete as that of Constantine and Licinius. So amazingly were affairs now changed, that contending emperors courted the favour of

Death of
Maximin.

* Laet. de M. P. † Euseb. B. X. C. IX.

the poor persecuted Christians. After this he was struck with a sudden plague over his whole body, pined away with hunger, fell down from his bed, his flesh being so wasted away by a secret fire, that it consumed and dropped off from his bones; his eyes started out of their sockets; and in his distress he began to see God passing judgment on him.* Frantic in his agonies, he cried out, "It was not I, but others who did it." At length, by the increasing force of torment, he owned his guilt, and every now and then implored Christ, that he would compassionate his misery. He confessed himself vanquished, and gave up the ghost.†

Thus closed the most memorable of all the attacks of Satan on the Christian Church. Since that time he has never been able to persecute Christians, as such, within the limits of Roman civilization in Europe. I thought the account of the most violent attempt to eradicate the Gospel, ever known, deserved to be distinctly related. If some things happened more approaching to the nature of miracles, than ordinary history knows, the greatness of the contest shows at once the propriety of such signal divine interpositions, and renders them more credible. The present age affects a scepticism more daring than any preceding one; but in every age before this, all pious and considerate persons have agreed that the arm of God was lifted up in a wonderful manner, at once to chastise and to purify his Church, and also to demonstrate the truth of Christian religion to the proudest and the fiercest of his enemies, till they were obliged to confess that the Gospel was divine, and must stand in the earth invincible; that the most High ruleth, and that he will have a Church in the world, which will glorify him, in spite of earth and hell united, and that this Church contains in it all that deserves the name of true wisdom and true virtue.

* Lactantius tells us, that the immediate cause of his death was poison, which he drank in his fury. But I think Eusebius's account more probable, because Lactantius allows that he lived four days under torture.

† It is remarkable, that all the associates of Maximian in his crimes, partook also of his punishments. Among these Culecian, the bloody governor of Thetis, and Theoctenus, are distinguished. His enchanters were, by torments under the authority of Licinius, compelled to lay open the frauds of their employers, and he and they, with all the children and relations of the tyrant, were destroyed.

CHAPTER II.

A VIEW OF THE STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, ON ITS ESTABLISHMENT UNDER CONSTANTINE.

This emperor from early life had some predilection in favour of Christianity. His father Constantius, like Agrippa, had been almost persuaded to be a Christian, and probably the same fear of man and the same love of the world operated as a check upon both. This, however,* we are informed concerning him, that he condemned the polytheism of the times, and worshipped one God, the maker of all things, that he had multitudes of Christians in his palace, and among these, ministers of the Gospel, who openly prayed for the emperor. The knowledge of these things, joined to the remarkable contrast between the moral character of his father, and that of the other emperors, must have made some impression in favour of the Christian religion on the intelligent spirit of Constantine, though more pungent views of internal depravity and guilt be needful to induce the mind to enter fully into the spirit of the Gospel. But even a worldly mind may feel the need of divine assistance, when dubious under the prospect of important secular events: And Constantine marching from France into Italy against Maxentius, on an expedition, which was like either to exalt or to ruin him, was oppressed with anxiety. Some god he thought needful to protect him. The God of the Christians he was most inclined to respect; but he wanted some satisfactory proof of his real existence and power; and he neither understood the means of acquiring this, nor could he be content with the atheistical indifference, in which so many generals and heroes since his time have acquiesced. He prayed, he implored with much vehemence and importunity; and God left him not unanswered. While he was marching with his forces, in the afternoon, the trophy of the Cross appeared very luminous in the heavens, higher than the sun, with this inscription, "Conquer by this."‡ He and his soldiers were astonished at the sight. But he continued pondering on the event till night. And Christ appeared to him when asleep, with the same sign of the cross, and directed him to

* Euseb. Life of Constantine, XVII.

† *Toto vero*

make use of the symbol as his military ensign. Constantine obeyed, and the cross was henceforward displayed in his armies.*

Constantine, who hitherto was totally unacquainted with Christian doctrine, asked the pastors who this God was, or what was the meaning of the sign. They told him, that it was God, the only-begotten Son of the only true God; that the sign was the trophy of the victory, which he, when on earth, had gained over death. At the same time they explained to him the causes of his coming, and the doctrine of his incarnation. From that time Constantine firmly believed the truth of Christianity. He would have acted irrationally, if he had not; and it were an inexcusable want of candour to ascribe to motives merely political a course of conduct in favour of Christianity, in which he persevered to his death; and which he began at a time when the triumph of the Christian cause and the success of his arms as connected with it were extremely dubious. He began after this to read the Scriptures, and zealously patronized the pastors of the Church all his days. Whether he really loved the Gospel, and felt its influence on his own heart, is a doubtful question; but that he believed it to be divinely true, is certain,

• I give the narrative of Eusebius as concisely as possible. It is proper to add, that he tells us that he had the story of the miraculous appearance in the heavens from the emperor himself a long time after, and that confirmed by an oath. He, who is determined not to believe Christianity to be divine, will doubtless discover this miracle, from the same spirit which has laboured here to harden his heart against much more striking evidence. With such a one I would not converse on the subject. But to those who admit the divine origin of Christianity, if any such doubt the truth of the miracle, I would say, that it seems to me more reasonable to admit a divine interposition in a case like this, especially considering the important consequences, than to deny the veracity of Eusebius or of Constantine. On the former view God acts like himself, *condes* according to hear prayer, leading the mind by temporal kindness to look to him for spiritual blessings; and confirming the truth of his own religion; on the latter, two men out of the very best, but surely by no means of the worst character, are irretrievably suspected of deliberate perjury or falsehood.

• I suspect Eusebius expresses here his own sense of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, which will be considered hereafter. His words are, *non esse contra Deum, sed eo, qui, non pro*

if a consistent and long course of actions be admitted as evidence.

It belongs to civil history to describe the civil and military transactions of this warlike and magnanimous prince. He was* no sooner made master of Rome by the destruction of Maxentius, than he honoured the cross by putting a spear of that form into the hand of the statue erected for him at Rome. He now built churches, and showed great beneficence to the poor. He encouraged the meeting of bishops in synods, he honoured them with his presence, and employed himself in continually aggrandizing the Church. In the mean time his associate in the East, Licinius, began to persecute it.

Notwithstanding the proofs which this man had had of the divine interposition in favour of the Gospel, during his contest with Maximin, the force of old prejudices imbibed under Galerius operated at length, in conjunction with the native depravity of the human heart, to induce him to renew the persecution. He prohibited Christian synods in his dominions, expelled believers from his court, and forbade the women to attend the public assemblies of men, and ordered them to furnish themselves with separate teachers of their own sex. He dismissed from his armies those who refused to sacrifice, and forbade any supplies to be afforded them in their necessities. He proceeded still further. He murdered bishops, and destroyed churches. At Amasia, in Pontus, his cruelty was particularly distinguished. He used enchantments, and once more Satan made a feeble attempt to recover by his means the ground he had lost. It was not probable that Licinius should take these steps without quarrelling with Constantine, and a war soon commenced between the two princes. Licinius put the truth or falsehood of the Gospel on the event of war. It was an unwarranted appeal, but God answered him in his own way. He lost in

A. D.
324 & 325.

the issue both his empire and his life. It is remarkable, that one of Constantine's soldiers, who parted with the banner of the cross in battle to save his life, lost it, while he, who in his room supported and upheld the banner, was

His victory over the tyrant was providentially striking; and the credulity of Maxentius, and the failure of the heathen oracles, which encouraged him to proceed against Constantine, are no less remarkable. But this is civil history.

preserved. It were to be wished, that there had been as much zeal at this time to support the doctrines and realize the power of the cross, as there was to honour its formalities. But this was far from being the case.

For neither in Constantine, nor in his favourite bishops, nor in the general appearance of the church, can we see much of the spirit of godliness. Pompous apparatus, augmented superstitions and unmeaning forms of piety, much show and little substance appears. This is the impression, which the account given by Eusebius has left on my mind. As the matter of my history is very scanty here, I shall endeavour to compress it into a small compass, chiefly with a view to catch the face of Christianity at this period, and to pave the way for a more complete understanding of the great controversy, which must soon arrest our attention.

If we look at the external appearance of Christianity, nothing can be more splendid. An emperor, full of zeal for the propagation of the only divine religion, by edicts restores to the Church every thing of which it had been deprived, indemnifies those who had suffered, honours the pastors exceedingly, recommends to governors of provinces to promote the Gospel; and though he will neither oblige them nor any others to profess it, yet he forbids them to make use of the sacrifices commonly made by prefects; he erects churches exceedingly sumptuous and ornamental, with distinctions of the parts corresponding in some measure to those in Solomon's temple, discovers with much zeal the Sepulchre of Christ at Jerusalem, real or pretended, and honours it with a most expensive sacred edifice. His mother Helena fills the whole Roman world with her munificent acts in support of religion; and after erecting churches, and travelling from place to place to evidence her zeal, dies before her son, aged eighty years. Nor is the Christian cause neglected even out of the bounds of the Roman empire. Constantine zealously pleads, in a letter to Sapor king of Persia, for the Christians of his dominions; he destroys idol temples, prohibits impious pagan rites, puts an end to the savage fights of gladiators, stands up with respectful silence to hear the sermon of Eusebius, bishop of Cæsarea, the historian; furnishes him with the volumes of the Scriptures for the use of the

churches, orders the observation of the festivals of martyrs, has prayers and reading of the Scripture at his court, dedicates churches with great solemnity, makes Christian orations himself, one of which of a considerable length is preserved by the historian his favourite bishop, directs the sacred observation of the Lord's day, to which he adds that of Friday also, the day of Christ's crucifixion, and teaches the soldiers of his army to pray by a short form made for their use.

It may seem invidious to throw any shade on this picture; but though the abolition of lewd, impious, and inhuman customs must have been of great advantage to society, and though the benefits of Christianity, compared with paganism, to the world, appear very strong by these means; yet all this, if sound principle be wanting, is but form and shadow. As it was difficult to clear Origen of depreciating the divinity of Christ, so it is still more difficult to exculpate Eusebius, with whom he was a favourite author. Not to anticipate what will more properly pass under examination hereafter, there seems to have been both in Eusebius and some of his friends, and probably in the emperor himself, a disposition, of which perhaps they were not conscious, to lessen the honours of the Son of God. In his oration at the dedication of the church at Tyre, he distinguishes between the first and the second cause, and seems very careful to give the supreme title exclusively to the Father. His sermons breathe little of Christianity, so far as I have seen them. He largely assigns various causes for the coming of Christ into the world, and though among these he gives some place to the work of redemption and sacrifice for sin, he speaks of them slightly, and as it were by the bye. I have observed also, that, in one place of his writings, he speaks in a very subordinate manner of the Holy Ghost, though it must be confessed, he is so rhetorical, and indistinct in his theological discourses, that it is difficult to extract any determinate propositions from his writings.

It was to be expected that great defectiveness of doctrine would not fail to influence practice. External piety flourished, monastic societies in particular places were also growing; but faith, love, heavenly-mindedness, appear very rare; yet, among the poor and obscure Christians I hope there was far more godliness

than could be seen at courts, and among bishops and persons of eminence. The doctrine of real conversion was very much lost, or external baptism was placed in its stead; and the true doctrine of justification by faith, and the true practical use of a crucified Saviour for troubled consciences, were scarcely to be seen at this time. There was much outward religion, but this could not make men saints in heart and life. The worst part of the character of Constantine is, that as he grew older, he grew more culpable, oppressive in his own family, oppressive to the government, oppressive by eastern superfluous magnificence; and the facts to be displayed will show, how little true humility and charity were now known in the Christian world, while superstition and self-righteousness were making vigorous shoots, and the real Gospel of Christ was hidden from men who professed it.

The schism of the Donatists, as its history throws some light on the manners of Christians, will deserve a few words. In this place. During the cessation of the persecution in the West, while it raged still in the East, on the death of Mensurius bishop of Carthage, a council of neighbouring bishops was called for the appointment of his successor. The council was thinner than had been usual, through the management of Hetrus and Celsinus, two persons who aspired to the office, whose ambition was however disappointed, the election falling on Caecilian the deacon. All that was essential in the appointment of a bishop was observed in this transaction; for Caecilian had confessedly the suffrage of the whole church. The two disappointed persons protested against the election, and were joined by Lucilla, a rich lady, who for a long time before had been too haughty to submit to discipline. One Donatus of Cassidre, who had been a schismatic before this time, offered himself as the chief of the faction. A number of bishops co-operated with him, proved that they had not been called to the ordination of Caecilian. Seventy bishops, a number of whom had been traitors,* met thus together at Carthage, to depose Caecilian.

The reader will conceive in a strong

light, how corrupt the pastors of the African church must have been at that time, when such a number met to impose a bishop on the church of Carthage against the general sense of the Christians at that place, and were at the same time unable to object any one crime, or support the least material accusation against the pastor, who had the hearts of the people. Yet they persevered, and ordained one Majorinus, a servant of the factious lady, who, to support the ordination, gave large sums of money, which the bishops divided among themselves.

Such is the origin of the famous Donatist schism, the second class of dissenters who have appeared in the records of the Church; but, as in their origin, so in their manners and spirit all along, they seem unworthy to be compared with the first class, the Novatian, which still existed. With these a degree of real spirituality existed; whereas with the Donatist, there does not appear to have been any.*

It would be tedious to enter into a detail of Constantine's proceedings in regard to this sect. Undoubtedly he had a great respect for whatever he conceived to be Christian. With much candour and patience he examined and re-examined the case of the Donatists; and the issue was constantly to their disgrace. They stirred up magistrates to deprive the Christian pastors of the benefit of the imperial laws, by which they were exempted from public offices, and endeavoured to deprive them of their churches, till the emperor was at last provoked to confiscate the places of their assemblies. Sylvanus, one of the Donatist bishops, being convicted of having delivered up the vessels of the church, and of being simoniacally ordained a bishop, and of having deprived the Christians of their church, was sent into banishment, with some others of the faction. Yet such was the kindness of Constantine toward the Christian name, that he recalled them from their banishment, and granted religious toleration to the party, of which lenity they continued to make an unworthy use.

How corrupt is human nature! The Church has outward peace, and even prosperity. Yet feuds, contentions, and the most unworthy spirit of avarice and ambition, appear very prevalent. So un-

* A name of infamy given to those who to save their lives in the persecution, had delivered the Scriptures or goods of the church to the persecuting powers.

grateful were men for that admirable administration of Providence, which as we have seen now took place in their favour. Another scourge seemed quickly necessary, a scourge generated from their own vices: indeed, though evidently of divine appointment for the chastisement of the Church. Satan saw his time; pure doctrinal truth was now too commonly mere speculation. Men were ripe for a perversion of doctrine. Lower or ambiguous views of Christ were secretly rising amidst the platonic studies of learned men. Origen gave the first handle; Eusebius the historian with cautious prudence was fomenting the evil. And at length a bold and open assault was made against the Deity of the Son of God, and persecution was stirred up against Christians by those who bore the Christian name. The people of God were exercised, refined, and improved; while the Christian world at large was torn in pieces with violence, intrigue, and scandalous animosities, to the grief of all who loved the Son of God, and walked in his ways in godly simplicity.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROGRESS OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY, TILL THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.*

PETER, bishop of Alexandria, had suffered martyrdom under the Dioclesian persecution. Numbers had recanted at that time to save their lives, and among the rest Meletius, an Egyptian bishop. This man was of a schismatical and enterprising spirit, and having been deposed by Peter before his martyrdom, he separated himself, continued bishop on his own plan, ordained others, and gave rise to the third species of Dissenters: THAT is the proper name of the Meletian party; for they are not charged with corruption in their doctrine. Nor was this the only person who disturbed the Church, and exercised the patience of Peter. Arius of Alexandria, in his beginnings, was a promising character, but on the appearance of the Meletian party, he espoused their cause. Some time after, he left it, and reconciled himself to Peter, and was by him ordained deacon: but condemning

the bishop's severity in rejecting the Meletian baptism, and exhibiting a restless and factious spirit, he was again expelled from the Church. After which Peter was called to his rest by martyrdom. He was, like Cyprian, too severe in rejecting the baptism of schismatics and heretics, but his zeal was doubtless from a desire of preserving the uniformity of Christian faith, and he did not live to see still stronger proofs of that turbulent and contentious spirit in his deacon, which has rendered the name of Arius so famous in history.

Achillas had succeeded to the bishopric: and from him Arius, by submissions, again obtained favour. Understanding and capacity will command respect, and these were undoubtedly possessed by Arius

Character
of Arius.

in a great degree. He was by nature formed to deceive. In his behaviour and manner of life he was severe and grave; in his person tall and venerable; and in his dress almost monastic. He was agreeable and captivating in conversation, and well skilled in logic and all the improvements of the human mind, then fashionable in the world.*

Such was the famous Arius, who gave name to one of the most powerful heresies which ever afflicted the Church of Christ, and of whom Cicero's words, with little variation, in his masterly character of Catiline,† might be delivered; "had he not possessed some apparent virtues, he would not have been able to form so great a design, nor to have proved so formidable an adversary." He, who does much mischief in deceiving souls, must at least have a fair appearance of morals. Paul of Samosata wanted this, and he glittered only as the insect of a day.

Achillas advanced Arius to the office of presbyter, which in that church was more important than in others, because each presbyter had a distinct congregation of his own, and was not sent up and down to different churches, at the discretion of the bishop, as the general practice had been in the primitive Church. This practice, however, in time gave way to the Alexandrian custom. Alexander, the

* Sozomen, B. 15.

† See his Oration pro Cælio.—Neque unquam ex illo tam accleratus impetus extitisset, nisi tot vitiorum tanta immunitas quibusdam facilitatis et patientiæ radicibus niteretur.

* Socrates, l. 6.

successor of Achilles, under Constantine, treated Arius with respect, and appeared very backward to censure him for his dangerous speculations in religion. The pride of reasoning seduced the presbyter to assert,* that there was a time when the Son of God was not, that he was capable of virtue or of vice, and that he was a creature, and mutable as creatures are. Whilst he was insinuating these things, the easiness of Alexander in tolerating such notions was found fault with in the church. Necessity roused him at length, however unwilling, to contend, and in disputing before Arius and the rest of his clergy,† he affirmed that there was an union in the Trinity. Arius thinking that the bishop introduced Sabellianism, eagerly maintained the extreme which is opposite to that heresy, and said, "if the Father beget the Son, the son-gotten had a beginning of existence; hence it was evident there was a time when he was not."

I have given the narration from the two historians rather with a view to connect and reconcile them, than from a conviction that this dispute arose from Alexander's zeal to withstand the growth of Arianism. For it might have originated from his orthodox zeal in general, before Arius had yet distinctly branched his notions. Be that as it may, Arius evidently split on the common rock of all heresies, a desire of explaining by our reason the mysteries of things which we are required to believe on divine testimony alone. Many of the clergy joined the disputations presbyter, and it was no longer in Alexander's power to prevent a solemn cognizance of the cause. He was himself cautious and slow in his proceedings; while many persons of a grave cast, and strong eloquence, like Arius, espoused and fanned the infant heresy. Arius preached diligently at his church, diffused his opinions in all companies, and gained over many of the common people; a number of women who had professed virginity espoused his cause; and Alexander saw the ancient doctrine of the Church undermined continually.‡ Last resort measures and argumentative methods having been tried in vain, he summoned a synod of bishops, who met at

Alexandria, condemned Arius's doctrine, and expelled him from the Church, with nine of his adherents.

What Arius really held may be distinctly stated from the concurrent testimony of friends and enemies. Already some secret and ambiguous attempts had been made to lessen the idea of the divinity of the Son of God. While his eternity was admitted by Eusebius the historian, he yet was not willing to own him co-equal with the Father. Arius went greater lengths: he said, That the Son proceeded out of a state of non-existence; that he was not before he was made; that he, who is without beginning, has set his Son as the beginning of things that are made, and that God made one, whom he called Word, Son, and Wisdom, by whom he did create us. From these, and such like expressions, it is evident what Arianism properly is: for the epistle of Arius himself,* preserved by Theodoret, represents his views in the same manner as his adversaries have done, and proves that no injustice was done to him in this respect.†

* Theod. B. I. c. 5.

† I shall give the reader the epistle at length, that he may judge for himself, though some parts of it are of no consequence with respect to the controversy. I believe it is the only fragment we have of his writings, and it is therefore the most authentic of all records, to decide the question, what Arianism is.

The Epistle of Arius to Eusebius, Bishop of Nicomedia.

"To my most desirable lord, the faithful man of God, the orthodox Eusebius, Arius persecuted by father Alexander unjustly, for the sake of truth, which conquers all things, of which you are the defender; joy in the Lord! My father Ammonius coming to Nicomedia, it appeared to me my duty to address you by him, and at the same time to inform your exalted charity and kind disposition, which you have towards the brethren, for the sake of God and his Christ, that the bishop harasses and persecutes us greatly, and moves every machine against us, so as even to expel us from the city as Atheists, because we agree not with him who publicly says, 'always God, always the Son: at the same time the Father, at the same time the Son: the Son co-exists with God without being begotten: he is always begotten, yet not begotten: God does not precede the Son in thought, not for a moment: always God, always the Son: the Son exists from God himself.' And when Eusebius your brother in Cæsarea, and Theodotus, and Paulinus, and

* Nicæmen, B. I. c. 15. † Soerates, I. 3.

† Nicæmen, I. 3.

‡ Theod. B. I. c. 2. See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

It is an easy thing to say here, that silence and charity would have been the best means of preserving peace on all sides; but then this mode of speaking supposes that the controversy was frivolous. No real Christian can think it unimportant, whether his Saviour be believed to be the Creator or a creature. The soul is of too great consequence for men to hazard its salvation on they know not what. And it then appeared to all humble and charitable Christians, that to persist in blaspheming God, was at least as practical an evil as to persist in drunkenness and theft. All these found themselves obliged to join with Alexander against Arius. Silence was a vice in this case; though it can never be enough lamented how little care was taken of humility and charity, of both which the exercise is perfectly consistent with the sincere zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity; but true religion itself was low; the face of the Church was "sullied and dishonoured, yet still divine." And amidst the numbers who, from fashion, prejudice, or worse motives, joined with the Alexandrian bishop, we must look for those, though they are hard to be found, who feared God, and whose history alone is the subject before us. The principles of Arius exclude him and his followers, and by the fullest light of antiquity their ac-

tions also exclude them from being numbered among the sound, faithful, intelligent followers of Jesus.

The Christian world now became the scene of animosity and contention. The orthodox and heretical did each their utmost to support their several pretensions: practical religion was too much forgotten by both sides; and the former, from the want, or at least from the very low state of experimental religion, were deprived of the very best method of supporting the truth, by showing its necessary connexion with the foundation of true piety and virtue. The* Gentiles beheld the contest and triumphed; and on their theatres they ridiculed the contentions of Christians, to which their long and grievous provocations of their God had justly exposed them. Alexander repeatedly, in letters and appeals, maintained his cause, and so far as speculative argumentation can do it, he proved his point from the Scriptures; while Arius strengthened himself by forming alliances with various bishops, and particularly with Eusebius of Nicomedia,† who supported Arianism with all his might. He had been translated from Berytus in Syria, and by living in the metropolis (for there Constantine resided much) he had an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the emperor. Near a hundred bishops in a second synod at Alexandria condemned Arius, who was now obliged to quit that place, and try to gain supporters in other parts of the empire.

In the year 324, Constantine being at Nicomedia, and intending to make a farther progress into the East, was prevented by the news of these contentions. So important were Christian affairs now grown, at a time when it is with difficulty we can find any eminent spirit of genuine piety. The emperor sincerely strove to make up the breach; for his regard for Christianity in general was doubtless sincere; but it is not in ecclesiastical proceedings that we can discover any trace of that penetration and discernment for which in civil story he is so justly renowned. He wrote both to Alexander and Arius, blamed both, expressed his desire for their agreement, and explained nothing. He sent the letter by Hosius

Athanasius,* and Gregory, and Aetius, and all the bishops in the East, said, that God who had no beginning, existed before the Son, they were condemned, except only Philagotius, and Ellanicus, and Macarius, heretical unlearned men, some of whom call the Son an emanation, others a projection, others begotten together with him. We cannot bear to hear these impieties, though the heretics should threaten us with ten thousand deaths. But what we say and think, we have both taught and do teach; That the Son is not unbegotten, nor a part of the unbegotten, by any means, nor of any subject matter; but that by will and counsel he existed before the times and the ages, full God, only begotten, not mixed with any thing heterogeneous, and before he was begotten, or created, or defined, or founded, HE WAS NOT; for he was not unbegotten. We are persecuted because we say the Son hath a BEGINNING; but God is without beginning. For this we are persecuted, and because we say, that the Son is from NON-EXISTENCE, and thus we said, because he is not part of God, nor of any subject matter: for this we are persecuted; the rest you know. I pray that you may be strong in the Lord,—remembering our afflictions."

* Not the famous Athanasius.

* I use the language of the times, in calling the Pagan world Gentiles.

† He must not be confounded with Eusebius of Cæsarea, the historian.

bishop of Cordoba, one whose faith and piety had been distinguished in the late persecutions. Hosius endeavoured to make up the breach; but it was impossible. The two parties were formed, and were determined; worldly motives were too predominant in both to admit of an easy compromise; and it was not in the power of those who loved both truth and peace, to sacrifice the former to the latter, consistently with a good conscience, however sincerely desirous they must have been of promoting both. For the object of contention was not a trifle, but a fundamental in religion.

Constantine now took the resolution of summoning the aid of the whole Christian Church; and the Nicene Council calls for our attention.

The bishops, collected from all parts of the Christian world, met at Nice in Bithynia; and their number, according to the statement of Athanasius, who was present, amounted to three hundred and eighteen. Of these, if we may believe Philostorgius the Arian historian, twenty-two expressed the cause of Arius; others make the minority still less. Be that as it may, scarce many presbyters were there besides the bishops, it is not probable that the whole number of persons assembled in the council was less than six hundred.

They met in the year 325, being transported to Nice in public conveyances at the emperor's expense, and maintained at his cost, while they resided there.

Before the immediate business of the synod was entered upon, their attention was engaged by the attempts of some Grecian philosophers, who appeared among them; some with a design to satisfy their curiosity concerning Christianity itself, others wishing to involve the Christians in a cloud of verbal subtilties, and to enjoy the mutual contradictions of the followers of Christ. One of them distinguished himself above the rest by the pomp and arrogance of his pretensions, and derided the clergy as ignorant and illiterate. On this occasion an old Christian, who had suffered with magnanimous constancy, during the late persecutions, though unacquainted with logical forms, undertook to contend with the philosopher. Those who were more earnest to gratify curiosity than to investigate truth, endeavoured to raise a laugh at the old man's expense; while serious

spirits were distressed to see a contest apparently so unequal. Respect for the man, however, induced them to permit him to engage; and he immediately addressed the philosopher in these terms: "Hear, philosopher, says he, in the name of Jesus Christ. There is one God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible, who made all these things by the power of his Word, and confirmed them by the holiness of his Spirit. This Word, whom we call the Son of God, compassionating the sons of men involved in error and wickedness, chose to be born of a woman, to converse with men, and to die for them; and he will come again as the Judge of all things which men have done in the body. That these things are so, we believe in simplicity; do not then labour in vain, investigating the manner in which these things may or may not be, and seeking to confute things which ought to be received by faith; but if thou believest, answer me, now that I ask thee." Struck with this plain authoritative address, the philosopher said, "I do believe;" with pleasure owned himself vanquished, confessed that he embraced the same sentiments with the old man, and advised the other philosophers to do the same, swearing that he was changed by a divine influence, and moved by an energy which he could not explain.*

Men will draw their conclusions from this story, according to their different tastes and views. A self-sufficient reasoner will despise the instruction it contains; but he who thinks with St. Paul, will consider the whole story as no mean comment on his words, that your "faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God;" nor will he much regard the prudence of those who labour to accommodate Christian ideas to the spirit of unbelievers, by which they only weaken themselves, and abate not in the least the equality of their opposers. They will think it better to go forth in simple dependence on God, trusting that he will bless his own word with victorious energy. Such know that even in our own times, there want no instances of conversions of a similar kind; and those who are still disposed to object, should at least be told, that the story has all the proper marks of historical credibility, whatever inferences they may be pleased to draw from it.

* Sozomen, B. I. c. 13.

I fear we shall not find in the transactions of the whole Nicene council so instructing a narrative. The emperor himself came to the synod, and exhorted them to peace and unanimity. A number of mutual accusations having been presented to him, he threw them all into the fire, protesting that he had not read one of them, and charged them to forbear, and forgive one another. After this very candid and generous procedure, he gave them leave to enter directly on the business of the synod. They canvassed the doctrine of Arius, extracted his propositions out of his own writings, and argued the subject with great vehemence; Constantine himself acting as moderator, and endeavouring to bring them to perfect agreement. But it soon appeared, that without some explanatory terms, decisively pointing out what the Scriptures had revealed, it was impossible to guard against the subtleties of the Arians. Did the Trinitarians assert that Christ was God? the Arians allowed it, but in the same sense as holy men and angels are styled gods in Scripture. Did they affirm that he was truly God? the others allowed, that he was made so by God. Did they affirm that the Son was naturally of God? it was granted; for even we, said they, are of God, of whom are all things. Was it affirmed, that the Son was the power, wisdom, and image of the Father? we admit it, replied the others, for we also are said to be the image and glory of God. Such is the account* which Athanasius gives of the disputations. He was at that time deacon of the church of Alexandria, and supported his bishop with so much accuracy and strength of argument, as to lay the foundation of that fame, which he afterwards acquired by his zeal in this controversy. What could the Trinitarians do in this situation? to leave the matter undecided, was to do nothing; to confine themselves merely to Scripture terms, was to suffer the Arians to explain the doctrine in their own way, and to reply nothing. Undoubtedly they had a right to comment according to their own judgment, as well as the Arians; and they did so in the following manner. They collected together the passages of Scripture, which represent the Divinity of the Son of God, and observed that taken together they amounted to a proof of his being of the SAME SUBSTANCE WITH

THE FATHER, *ομοουσιον*. That creatures were indeed said to be of God, because, not existing of themselves, they had their beginning from him; but that the Son was peculiarly of the Father, being of his substance, as begotten of him.

It behoves every one who is desirous of knowing simply the mind of God from his own word, to determine for himself, how far their interpretation of Scripture was true. The Council however was, by the majority before stated, convinced, that this was a fair explanation, and that the Arian use of the terms, God, true God, and the like, was a more deception, because they affixed to them ideas, which the Scriptures would by no means admit. So the most pious Christians have thought in all ages since. But to censure the council for introducing a new term, when all that was meant by it was to express their interpretation of the Scriptures, appears unreasonable to the last degree, however fashionable. To say that they ought to have confined themselves to the very words of Scripture, when the Arians had first introduced their own gloss, seems much the same, as to say that the Trinitarians had not the same right with the Arians to express their own interpretation of Scripture, and in their own language.

The great patron of the Arians was Eusebius of Nicomedia, who wrote a letter to the council, in which he found fault with the idea of the Son of God being uncreated. The whole Arian party presented also their confession of faith. Both that and the letter of Eusebius were condemned as heretical. The venerable Hosius of Corduba was appointed to draw up a creed, which is in the main the same that is called the Nicene Creed to this day. It soon received the sanction of the Council, and of Constantine himself, who declared, that whoever refused to comply with the decree, should be banished. Eusebius of Caesarea, the historian, expressed for some time his doubts concerning the term consubstantial. He observed, in a letter which he wrote on this occasion to his church, that all the mischief had arisen from the use of miscriptural terms, and that he at last subscribed to the term for the sake of peace. It would undoubtedly be unjust to accuse this great man of Arianism. Yet why was he so much disposed to favour Arius, by writing to Alexander, as if he had been wronged? why so disposed to join after-

* See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

wadra, as we shall see, against Athanasius! The truth is, he seems to have held a middle notion, that the Son of God was from eternity, but was not Jehovah; the very same notion, if I mistake not, which was revived by the famous Dr. Clark, explained in his Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, and I think very solidly confuted by Dr. Waterland, in his reply.*

From the opinion of Eusebius thus ascertained, one may form an idea of Constantine's creed, if indeed he had any distinct one in his mind. Undoubtedly Eusebius was his great favourite, and made his imperial disciple as he pleased. But let his opinions have been what they may, he seems not to have been very zealous for any thing, except peace and uniformity. Never was a council more free from political impediments. The bishops undoubtedly spoke their sentiments without reserve in general; and Constantine was disposed to give his sanction to any creed, to which the majority should agree. We have here then the testimony of nearly the whole Christian world in favour of the doctrine of the proper Deity of the Son of God, a testimony free, unbiassed, and unrestrained. How can this be accounted for but hence, that they followed the plain sense of Scripture, and of the Church in preceding ages? As to the connexion between church and state, and the propriety of civil penalties in matters of religion, I may find a more proper place to dwell upon these subjects hereafter.

Arius was deposed, excommunicated, and forbidden to enter Alexandria. The council at first refused to subscribe, but being advised to yield at length by Con-

stantia their patroness, the emperor's sister, they consented. But by the insertion of a single letter they reserved to themselves their own sense, subscribing, not that the Son is the same, but only of like essence with the Father.* Honesty is however always respectable. Out of twenty-two Arian bishops, two were found who persisted in refusing; Secundus of Ptolemais, and Theonas of Marmarica: the former of whom bluntly rebuked the courtly Eusebius of Nicomedia for his dissimulation. Arius and his associates were banished into Illyricum.

The Meletian controversy was also settled. Meletius was permitted to live in his own city, with the title of bishop, but without authority. His sect was indulged in some degree, and continued a long time after in the church. The dispute concerning Easter was likewise finally adjusted in this council.

The canons appointed by this famous council will deserve a remark or two, as at least they may give us some idea of the state and spirit of Christian religion at that time.

One of them forbids clergymen to make themselves eunuchs; which shows that there were then instances of the same misguided zeal, which Origen in early life had exhibited. Another forbids the ordination of new converts, and supports itself by that well-known canon of still higher authority; "Not a Novice, least being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil." A third provides for the chastity of the clergy. The council were even proceeding to restrain those of them who had wives from cohabiting with them, after their ordination; but were checked by Paphnutius, a bishop of Thebais, who had lost an eye during the late persecutions. He had himself been brought up in a monastery from his childhood, and was renowned for the purity of his manners. He observed that it was sufficient for a man once ordained to be prohibited to marry, but that he ought not to be separated from the wife whom he had married when a layman. The authority of a person so eminent in sanctity was decisive; and this species of superstition, which had

* That is what is commonly called high Arrianism, and secretly grows among us; the more so, because not distinctly understood, and because it is consistent with some sort of Trinitarian doctrine. It is doubtless the worst specimen of all heresies. But two questions its defenders seem incapable of answering: 1. Why Christ is so often called Jehovah, the co-eternal God, in Scripture? 2. How they can clear themselves of the charge of holding more Gods than one?

† Not a few of the Nicene fathers bore on their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus. Paul, bishop of Nemesura at the banks of Euphrates, had been debilitated by the application of hot iron to both his hands; others appeared there deprived of their right eyes, others deprived of their legs. A crowd of martyrs in truth were seen collected into one body.—Theodoret, B. I. c. 7.

* Not *consubstantial*, but *homoiousios*. It is remarkable, that this duplicity of theirs is recorded by Photostorgius the Arian historian.—See Cave's Life of Athanasius.

already made considerable advances, was stopped for the present in its career. Moreover some care was taken in this council against the progress of covetousness in the clergy, by the prohibition of the practice of usury. Translations also either of bishops, priests, or deacons, from one city to another, were forbidden. Eusebius of Nicomedia had been removed from Berytus, and the abuse began to grow into a custom. In all these cases, a desire of preserving purity of manners in the Church, though not in all points regulated with discretion, is observable. The same remark may be extended to another canon, which regulates the reception of penitent apostates, by directing that they shall continue three years among the auditors, and shall prostrate themselves seven years. A distinction also is made between those, who evinced by good works the sincerity of repentance, and those who appeared indifferent, and were merely formal in compliance with the rules of the church. And greater rigour of penance is prescribed to the latter.*

These things show that the fear of God was by no means extinct. Discipline, which had been relaxed toward the close of the last century, was revived, and the predominant spirit of superstition carried it, as formerly, into too great an extreme. Our age, which has lost almost all discipline in church affairs, can scarcely appreciate aright the merit of these rules, on account of the strength of its prejudices against all restraints.

Liberty was allowed to the Novatians also to return to the communion of the general church, nor was it insisted on, that they should be re-baptized, since they held nothing contrary to the fundamentals of godliness. With respect to the followers of Paul of Samosata, called Paulianists, some of whom still subsisted, it was required, that if they were admitted again into the church, they should be rebaptized, because they did not baptize in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. So accurately did they distinguish between a heretic and a schismatic, between essentials and circumstantialia. Apostolic discernment and piety, in no contemptible degree, animated the spirits of the Nicene fathers, notwithstanding the decline of piety from the primitive times. Constantine, zealous

for a pacific uniformity, had invited Aecius, a Novatian bishop, to the council, and asked him whether he assented to the decrees concerning the faith, and the observance of Easter. The council, says he, has decreed nothing new concerning these things. So I have always understood the church has received, even from the times of the Apostles. Why then, says the emperor, do you separate yourself from our communion? Because, replied Aecius, we think that to apostatize is the "sin unto death," and that those who are guilty of it ought never to be restored to the communion of the Church, though they are to be invited to repentance, and to be left to God, who alone has the power of forgiving sins. Constantine, who saw that his views were impracticably severe, said, "Set up a ladder, Aecius, and climb up to heaven by yourself."

Socrates* tells us, that he had this from a very credible old person, who had seen these things done in the council. He means most probably the Novatian dissenter, with whom he was intimately acquainted. Candour and moderation appear very visible in Socrates as an historian, and render him as credible a writer as any guide of those times. On this very respectable evidence then it is manifest, that a Novatian bishop, whose passions could no way be heated by the internal contentions of the general Church, believed the common doctrine of the Trinity, and believed that it had always been common. The narrowness of the Novatian principle of dissent prevented not the soundness of his faith and the general integrity of his mind. Nor is there any blemish laid to the charge of this people, except excessive severity. And it ought to be acknowledged to the honour of Constantine and the Nicene fathers, that while they exercised severity in civil matters towards heretical members of their own church, they allowed and continued the religious toleration of the Novatians in its full extent. But we have surely in this case an additional proof of the antiquity of the Nicene faith. We see in what light the matter appeared to a plain honest man, who had no concern in the commotions of the times, who had nothing to obtain or to lose for himself in the contest, whose character appears unsullied, and who most probably was a

* Fleury, B. XI. 16.

* B. I. c. 10.

pious person. He has no doubt respecting the common creed of the church, and though a separatist, he affirms that she had always held the proper Divinity of Jesus Christ. I do not find that the second sort of dissenters, the Donatists, were called into this council. They continued still in a tolerable state, but never seem to have had any effusion of the Divine Spirit among them. The third sort, the Meletians, seemed likely to be broken up by the death of their founder; but as he named to himself a successor, they continued still in a state of separation, though a number of them returned to the church.

Three months after the dissolution of the synod, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Theognis of Nice were banished, by the emperor's command, for attempting still to support the Arian cause.

Alexander dying five months after his return home, had desired that Athanasius might be appointed his successor. Alex-

Death of Alexander.

andria in general joined in the same request, which the modesty of Athanasius resisted a considerable time. His integrity and his abilities however pointed him out as a proper successor to the zealous Alexander. And he was at last ordained, with the strongest testimonies of general satisfaction. He was

Athanasius succeeds him.

not then above twenty-eight years of age, and he held the see forty-six years, and for that time with little intermission was exposed to persecution on account of his zeal against Arianism: and it must be owned, that constancy and firmness in a cause were never better tried than his were, through the whole course of this period.

After the death of Helena, Constantine showed particular kindness to Constantia his sister, who was much led by a presbyter secretly in the Arian interest. They persuaded her that Arius and his friends were unjustly condemned. She on her death-bed prevailed by her intreaties on Constantine to do justice to these men. The emperor, who seemed as much a child in religious discernment as he was a man in political sagacity, suffered himself to be imposed on by the ambiguous craft of Arius and his friend Euzoius, so as to write in their favour to the Churches.* Eusebius also, and Theognis, by owning the Nicene faith in

words, were restored to their sees.* The former wrote to Athanasius, desiring him to receive Arius, now returned from banishment, to communion; but in vain. Athanasius had principle, and could not sport with subscriptions and bonds, as his adversaries did. The Nicene creed had still all the sanction which church and state could give it. It was not at that time possible by all the artifices of ingenious and unprincipled men to persuade the Christian world, that the Scripture held what it did not, or that their fathers had all along thought as Arius did. Even the chiefs of Arianism had been now restored, not as Arians, but as men well affected to the doctrine of the Trinity. And they attempted by subtlety and artifice to establish at length what was impossible to be done by fair argument. Determined to ruin Athanasius, if possible, they united themselves closely with the Meletians, and infected them with their heresy. They procured the deposition of Eustathius of Antioch, an eloquent and learned professor, who was, on unjust pretences, banished from his see: This person, before his departure, exhorted his flock to be steadfast in the truth, and his words were of great weight with that flourishing church. He and several priests and deacons were banished. The good man bore the will of God with meekness and patience, and died in exile at Philippi. Eusebius of Cæsarea and Eustathius had opposed each other in matters of doctrine. The vacant see was now offered to the former, who prudently declined it. Asclepas of Gaza, and Eutropius of Adrianople, were driven also from their sees. And thus while the truth was supported in form, its friends by a variety of artifices were persecuted, and its enemies triumphed. A case not uncommon in our own times! Men void of principle had every secular advantage, while those who feared God, chose rather to suffer than to sin.

Among these Athanasius himself was eminently distinguished. To relate the various turns and changes of his life, by no means suits the design of this history: yet some account is necessary, that the reader may see BY FACTS, what sort of fruit was produced by Trinitarian, and what by Arian principles.

The repeated attempts of the adversaries of Athanasius at length so far pre-

* Sozomen, B. II. c. 37.

* Sozomen, B. II. c. 16.

vailed in prejudicing the mind of the emperor, that he ordered a synod to be convened at Tyre, not to examine the principles of the bishop, which even his adversaries had been obliged to admit, but to institute an inquiry, whether various

Council of
Tyre,
A. D. 335.

crimes, with which he was charged, had been really committed. In the year 335, the synod met under the direction of Eusebius of Caesarea, and some other bishops; before whom the bishop of Alexandria, attended by certain Egyptian bishops, was obliged to appear. Here Potamo, bishop of Heraclea, who had been in prison with Eusebius during the Dioclesian persecution, enraged to see the latter on the bench, rudely addressed him thus: "Must you, Eusebius, sit on the bench, while the innocent Athanasius stands to be judged at your bar? Who can bear such proceedings? Were not you in prison with me in the time of the persecution? I lost an eye in defence of the truth; you have no wound to show, but are both alive and whole. How got you out of prison, unless you promised to sacrifice, or actually did so?" Eusebius rose up and dissolved the meeting for that time, reproving him for his insolence. History throws no light on the subject of Potamo's aspersions; nor does he seem to have had any proof to support them. Nevertheless Eusebius, who himself so much supported the calumnies vented against Athanasius, had of all men the least right to complain. He suffered the same things which he inflicted on others; and Satan, having deeply embroiled the passions of men, continued thus to irritate and to inflame the Christian world.

The heaviest crimes were charged upon Athanasius, rebellion, oppression, rape and murder. But every thing appeared to be the result of malice. One case alone

The story
of Arse-
nius.

shall be mentioned, by which a judgment may be formed of all the rest. He was said to have murdered Arsenius, a Meletian bishop; for proof of which the accusers produced a box, out of which they took a dead man's hand, dried and salted, which they affirmed to be the hand of Arsenius, and that it was preserved by Athanasius for magical purposes. The Meletians charged Arsenius to conceal himself till they had effected their purpose. The party of Eusebius of Nicomedia spread the report through the

Christian world, that Arsenius had been privately murdered by the bishop of Alexandria, and Constantine himself, overcome by incessant importunities, was induced to order an inquiry to be made.*

Athanasius had learned by his own experience, that any accusation against himself, however improbable, was likely to find numerous and powerful supports. But Providence wonderfully confuted this attempt. Arsenius, notwithstanding the directions of the accusers to keep close, had privately conveyed himself to Tyre, intending to be secreted there during the whole time of the synod. It happened, that some servants belonging to Archelaus the governor, heard a rumour whispered, that Arsenius was in town. This they immediately told their master, who found him out, apprehended him, and gave notice to Athanasius. The Meletian tool, unwilling to blast his employers, and feeling the awkwardness of his situation, at first denied himself to be Arsenius. Happily, Paul the bishop of Tyre, who knew the man, deprived him of that refuge. The day of trial being come, the prosecutors boasted that they should give ocular demonstration to the court, of the guilt of Athanasius, and produced the dead hand. A shout of victory rang through the synod. Silence being made, Athanasius asked the judges, if any of them knew Arsenius? Several affirming that they did, Athanasius directs the man to be brought into the court, and asks, Is this the man whom I murdered, and whose hand I cut off? Athanasius turns back the man's cloak, and shows one of his hands; after a little pause, he puts back the other side of the cloak, and shows the other hand. "Gentlemen, you see," said he, "that Arsenius has both his hands; how the accusers came by the third hand, let them explain." Thus ended the plot to the shame of the contrivers.

That any persons, who bear the name of Christ, should deliberately be guilty of such villany, is deeply to be regretted. But let it be remembered, that the real faith of Christ was opposed to those who were concerned in this base act, and that enmity to the doctrine of the Trinity produced it. The story itself deserves also to be preserved as a memorable instance of the interposition of Divine Providence.

* Socrates, B. I. c. 27.

Athana-
sius ca-
lumniated.

Notwithstanding the clearest proofs of Athanasius's innocence, and that the whole course of his life was extremely opposite to such crimes as he was charged with, his enemies prevailed so far, that commissioners were despatched into Egypt, to examine the matters of which he was accused. Yet John, the Meletian bishop, the chief contriver of the plot, confessed his fault to Athanasius, and begged his forgiveness. And Arsenius himself renounced his former connexions, and desired to be received into communion with the Alexandrian prelate.

Egypt, where Athanasius must have been best known, was faithful to her prelate. Forty-seven bishops of that country entered a protest against the injustice of the council, but in vain. The Arian commissioners arrived at Alexandria, and endeavoured to extort evidence against him by drawn swords, whips, clubs, and all engines of cruelty.* The Alexandrian clergy desired to be admitted to give evidence, but were refused. To the number of fifteen presbyters and four deacons they presented, but to no purpose. The Maronitic clergy took the same steps, but to no purpose. The delegates returned with extorted evidence to Tyre, whence Athanasius, who saw no justice was to be had, had fled. They passed sentence, and deposed him from his bishopric.

Yet there were those in the synod of Tyre, who were willing to do justice to the much-angered prelate. Paphnutius, who has been before mentioned, took Maximus, bishop of Jerusalem, by the hand; "Let us be gone," said he, "it becomes not those who have lost their limbs for religion, to go along with such pernicious company." But the majority were very differently disposed.

Athanasius came to Constantinople, and desired justice from the emperor, and a fair trial. Constantine ordered the bishops of the synod to appear before him, and to give an account of what they had done. The greatest part of them returned home; but the genius of Eusebius of Nicomedia was not exhausted, and as he stood at no fraud, and was ashamed of no violence, he, with a few of the synod, went to Constantinople, and waving the old accusations, he brought a fresh one, namely, that Athanasius had threatened to stop the fleet that brought corn from Alexandria to Constantinople. Constan-

tine was credulous enough to be moved by the report: the Arian arts prevailed at court: those who used no arms but truth and honesty, were failed for the present; and Athanasius was banished to Treves in Gaul.

Banishment of Athanasius.

Arius, flushed with the success of his party, returned to Alexandria, and strengthened the hands of the heretics, who had long languished for want of his abilities. The city being torn with intestine divisions, the emperor ordered the heresiarch to come to Constantinople, and there to give an account of his conduct. That imperial city was now the chief seat of the contention. But Providence had given her a bishop not unequal to the contest. This was Alexander of Constantinople, a man of eminent piety and integrity, whose character at least seems to have approached as near to that of a primitive Christian as did that of any persons who distinguished themselves at this period. Eusebius of Nicomedia menaced him with deposition and exile, unless he consented to receive Arius into the church. On the one hand, the prelate knew too well the power of the Arians by what they had done already; and the Trinitarians were so far outmatched by them in subtilty and artifice, that though victorious in argument in the face of the whole world, with the council of Nice, and an orthodox emperor on their side, they yet were persecuted and oppressed, and their enemies prevailed at court. But on the other hand, it behooved not a Christian bishop to consent to the admission of an artful sectarian who could agree in form to the Nicene faith, and yet gradually insinuate his poisonous doctrines into the church. What were this but in fact to allow the wolf to enter the sheep-fold, and devour the flock? The mind of Alexander was directed aright in this conjuncture. He spent several days and nights in prayer alone in his church; the faithful followed his example, and prayer was made by the Church without ceasing, that God would interfere on this occasion. Controversies and the arts of logic were omitted; and they, who believed that the Nicene faith was holy, and of most interesting concern to the souls of men, sincerely committed their cause to God.

But Constantine himself was not to be prevailed on to admit Arius into the church, unless he could be convinced of

* Epist. Synod. Alexan. Athan.

his orthodoxy. He sent for him therefore to the palace, and asked him plainly, whether he agreed to the Nicene decrees. The heresiarch, without hesitation, subscribed: the emperor ordered him to swear: he assented to this also. I follow the narrative of Socrates, one of the most candid and moderate historians, who tells us that he had heard, that Arius had under his arm a written paper of his real sentiments, and that he swore that he believed as he had written. Whether he used this equivocation or not, is far from being clear. But Socrates, who is careful to tell us that he heard this reported, assures us that he did swear in addition to his subscriptions, and that this he knew from the emperor's epistles.* Constantine, whose scruples were now overcome, ordered Alexander to receive him into the church the next day. The good bishop had given himself to fasting and prayer, and renewed his supplications that day with great fervour in the church, prostrate before the altar, and attended by Marcarius only, who was a presbyter belonging to Athanasius. He begged, that if Arius was in the right, he himself might not live to see the day of contest; but if the faith was true, which he professed, that Arius, the author of all the evils, might suffer the punishment of his impiety. The next day seemed to be a triumphant one to the Arians: the heads of the party paraded through the city with Arius in the midst, and drew the attention of all toward them. When they came nigh the forum of Constantine, a sudden terror, with a disorder of the intestines, seized Arius. In his urgent necessity, he requested to be directed to a place of private retirement. Agreeably to the information he received, he hastened behind the forum; and there he poured forth his bowels with a vast effusion of blood.

Such was the exit of the famous Arius. The place of his death was memorable to posterity, and was shown in the times of Socrates.† The united testimony of an-

cient historians leaves no room to doubt of the fact. The reflections to be made upon it will vary, as men believe and are disposed. That it is usual with God to hear the prayers of his Church and to answer them remarkably on extraordinary occasions, will not be denied by those who reverence the word of God, and who remember the case of Hezekiah in the Old Testament,* and Peter in the New.† That the danger of the Church from heresy was particularly great at this time, will be equally admitted by all who believe that the Trinitarian doctrine includes within it whatever is most precious and interesting in the Gospel: that here on one side an appeal was made to God in his own appointed way, in faith, prayer, patience, and sincerity; while the other side dealt in falsehood, artifice, ambition and worldly policy, is evident from the narrative. From these premises a man who fears God will feel it his duty to believe that God interposed to comfort his Church, and to confound its adversaries. I see no method of avoiding this conclusion. The translator of Mosheim seems put to a great difficulty, when he declares it extremely probable that he was poisoned by his enemies. A more absurd and unwarranted imagination never entered into the heart of man. And, surely, such things ought not to have been said, without some proof or probable circumstance. Certain it is, that the fear of God rested with the Trinitarians, though it was at too low an ebb among all parties. Among these, however, nothing like such wickedness appears: while the Arians evidently seem to have been given up to the greatest villanies and profligacy. Great was the joy of the aged bishop, to find that God had not forsaken his Church. What effect the event had on Constantine, appears not. He died soon after, about the sixty-fifth year of his age, having first received baptism from Eusebius of Nicomedia. This he had long delayed, and the custom, from the imperial example would naturally gather fresh strength. Superstition had by this time taught men to connect by a necessary union the forgiveness of sins with the administration of

Death of the Emperor Constantine, A. D. 337.

* B. I. c. 8.

† Sozomen tells us, that sometime after a rich Arian bought the place, changed its form, and built there a house, that the event might gradually sink into oblivion. It must not be denied, however, that Arius also took pains to propagate his sentiments by methods more honourable than those of duplicity and fraud, in which he was so eminently versed. His historian Philostorgius, of whom some frag-

ments remain, assures us, that he composed songs for sailors, millers, and travellers, tending to support this heresy.

* Isaiah xxxvii.

† Acts xii.

the rite : and men who loved to continue in sin protracted their baptism to a time when they imagined it might be of the greatest advantage to them. I have nothing more to say of Constantine's religious character, than that it appears to have been much of the same sort as that of his panegyrist Eusebius, whose pompous eulogy of this emperor gives no very favourable idea of the writer's own views of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROGRESS OF THE ARIAN CONTROVERSY DURING THE REIGN OF CONSTANTIUS.

THE subject before us is more speculative and more secular than I could wish. I shall condense it as much as possible into a narrow compass, keeping more particularly in view the one great end of this history.

The great Constantine was succeeded by three sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. The first ruled in Spain and Gaul, the second in the East, the third in Italy and Africa. The other relations of the late emperor were put to death by the soldiers. Two sons alone of Julius his brother survived, Gallus and Julian. These were spoiled, privately educated, placed among the clergy, and appointed readers in the church. The latter was born at Constantinople, was only eight years old at the time of his uncle's death, and was reserved to be a scourge of degenerate Christendom, and a memorable instrument of Divine Providence.

Of Constantine the eldest we know but little; and that little is laudable. He sent back Athanasius to his church with great respect, and declared, that his father had intended to do the same, but was prevented by death. After a banishment of two years and four months, the bishop returned from Treves to his diocese, where he was received with general acclamations. Ambrosius of Gaza and Marcellus of Ancyra, who had been deposed by Arius, with others likewise, were restored; but Constantine himself was slain by the troops of his brother Constans. He was undoubtedly steady in his adherence to the Nicæna faith, but our information concerning him is too small to enable us to form any just estimate of his character.

His next brother, Constantius, furnishes but too many materials to illustrate his disposition. One Eusebius, an eunuch, his chamberlain, had great influence over him; and was himself the convert of the Arian priest whom Constantia had recommended to her brother, and to whom also the dying emperor had intrusted his will. The empress herself, the wife of Constantius, was infected with Arianism. By degrees at least the emperor, a man of weak understanding, corrupted with the pride of power, and ill informed in any thing that belonged to real Christianity, was confirmed in the fashionable heresy. There was then during this whole reign, which reached from the year 337 to the year 361, a controversy carried on between the Church and the heretics by arms and resources suited to the genius of the parties; those of the former were prayers, treatises, and preaching; of the latter, policy, intrigue, persecution, and the friendship of the great. The most zealous supporters of anti-scriptural sentiments seem far more disposed to cultivate the favour of men of rank, than to labour in the work of the ministry among the bulk of mankind.

About the year 340 died the famous Eusebius of Cæsarea. He was the most learned of all the Christians. After viewing him with some attention, I can put no other interpretation on his speculations than that which has been mentioned already.* He talks of a necessity that there was in God, to produce a middle power between himself and the angels, to lessen the infinite disproportion between him and the creature. Of the Holy Ghost he speaks still more explicitly, and represents him as one of the things made by the Son. Nevertheless, one might be disposed to put a favourable construction on various expressions of this great man, were it not that his practice is a strong comment on his opinions. He frequented the court, he associated with Arius, he joined in the condemnation of Athanasius. It really gives pain to part on such terms with the historian, to whom we are indebted for the preservation of so many valuable monuments of antiquity; but truth must be spoken, and his case is one of the many, which show that learning and philosophy,

Death of
Eusebius
of Cæsarea,
A. D. 340.

* IV. Demonstr. Evang. l. c. 6. See Fleury, B. XII. c. 6.

unless duly subordinate to the revealed will of God, are no friends to Christian simplicity: however, the loud noise which in our times has been made concerning the doctrine of the Trinity being derived from Platonism, should be silenced, when it is known that it was by admiration of Plato and Origen that Eusebius himself was perverted.

About the same time died Alexander of Constantinople, aged ninety-eight years,

Death of Alexander of Constantinople.

who had been bishop twenty-three years. His clergy asked him in his dying moments, whom he would recommend as his successor. If you seek a man of exemplary life, and

able to instruct you, says he, you have Paul: if you desire a man of secular skill, and one who knows how to maintain an interest among the great, and to preserve an appearance of religion, Macedonius is preferable. The event showed in what strength of discernment the aged prelate was still preserved, and how careful to his last breath he was of the propagation of Evangelical purity. These two men were just such as he described them. Paul, though young, was at once pious and discreet; Macedonius was far advanced in life, but yet was only a deacon. The Arian party during the lifetime of the venerable champion was unable to predominate in the metropolis. After his death they endeavoured to profer Macedonius; but the primitive ideas were too prevalent as yet among the populace, and Paul was elected. Constantius arriving afterwards was provoked at the election, encouraged an Arian council, directed its resolves, and Eusebius of Nicomedia was translated to the metropolitan see, which from this time continued under Arian government for forty years. Thus the ancient usages in choosing bishops were altered, and a precedent was set, of fixing in the hands of princes the government of the church in capital cities. A council of a hundred bishops of Egypt, with Athanasius at their head, protested against these proceedings to the whole Christian world.

A council was now convened at Antioch, supported by the presence of the emperor and by the manœuvres of Eusebius. Here they undertook to

Council at Antioch.

depose Athanasius, and ordain Gregory, a Cappadocian,

in his room; prevailing on Constantius to direct Philagrius, the prefect of Egypt,

to support their proceedings with an armed force. For, the integrity and probity of Athanasius had gained him so strong an ascendant in Egypt, that while the primitive modes of church government remained, it would have been impossible to expel him. Violence was found necessary to support iniquity, and an Arian prince was obliged to tread in the steps of his pagan predecessors, to support what he called the Church.

His views were promoted with vigour. Virgins and monks were cruelly treated at Alexandria: Jews and Pagans were encouraged to murder Christians.* Gregory himself entered the church with the governor and certain Pagans, and caused a number of the friends of Athanasius to be scourged and imprisoned. The persecuted prelate himself, who wanted not courage and capacity to resist, acted however a much more Christian part.

He fled from the storm, and made his escape to Rome.

Athanasius escapes to Rome,

A. D. 342.

This also happened about the year 342. It was a memorable season for the church of God, which now found her livery to be that of persecution, even when Pagans had ceased to reign. Gregory would not suffer the Athanasians, who in great numbers still refused to own the Arian domination, even to pray in their own houses. He visited Egypt in company with Philagrius. The greatest severities were inflicted on those bishops who had been zealous for the Nicene faith, though the decrees of the council had never been reversed, and the Arians as yet contented themselves with ambiguous confessions and the omission of the term consubstantial. Bishops were scourged and put in irons. Potamo, whom we have before celebrated, was beaten on the neck, till he was thought to have expired; he recovered in a small degree, but died some time after. His crime, in the eyes of the Arians, was doubtless an unvaried attachment to the Nicene faith.

While Gregory dealt in violence, his competitor used only the more Christian arms of argument. He published an epistle to the Christian world,† exhorting all the bishops to unite on the occasion. "The faith is now begun," says he, "it came to us by the Lord from his

* Apolog. Athan. 2. Fleury, B. II. 14.

† Athan. VI. p. 943.

disciples. Lest what has been preserved in the churches until now perish in our days, and we be called to an account for our stewardship, exert yourselves, my brethren, as stewards of the mysteries of God, and as beholding your rights taken away by strangers." He goes on to inform them of the proceedings of the Arians, observing that the like had not happened in the church since the ascension of our Saviour. "If there were any complaint against me, the people should not have been assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the spirit of ordination; all things should have been examined regularly, and in the presence of the clergy and people; a stranger should not have been intruded by force and the authority of secular judges, upon a people who neither require nor know him." He begs the bishops "not to receive the letters of Gregory, but to tear them, and treat the bearers with disdain as ministers of iniquity." It cannot be denied, that his arguments were sound, and that his cause was just. The Arians must bear the odium of being the first who secularized the discipline of the church. But in adding the close of the letter, I mean the reader to remark the decline of the spirit of the Gospel at this time. As on the one hand it were very unfair to confound the Athanasians and the Arians as on an equal footing in point of piety and morality, when the superiority of the former is too evident to admit of a dispute; so on the other hand it is certain, that the experimental use of the Divinity of Christ, by no means employed an equal degree of the zeal of its patrons with the abstract doctrine itself. Hence Athanasius, though always firm and constantly sincere, fails in meekness and charity.

This great man continued in exile at Rome for eighteen months, under the protection of Julius the bishop. Thither fled many others whom the Arian tyranny had expelled from their sees. Eusebius of Constantinople died soon after in the fulness of that prosperity, which his iniquity and oppression had procured him. Human depravity

Death of
Eusebius
of Con-
stantino-
ple.

under religious appearances had in him attained a rare degree of maturity. And the only lesson which his life affords seems to be this, to warn the clergy to beware of secular ambition, and the spirit of the world, which so exceedingly depraved this dignitary, that he at

length became one of the most memorable villains in history. A double election followed his death, that of Paul and that of Macedonius. Hermogenes, master of the militia,* was ordered by the emperor to banish Paul. He did so; and Paul's friends, exasperated by a series of persecutions, forgot the character of Christians, and killed Hermogenes. These events took place in or near the year 342.

Banish-
ment of
Paul.

Hermoge-
nes killed.

Paul however was then banished the city, and his holy character exempts him from all suspicion of being concerned in the outrage.

At Rome, Julius, in a council of the western bishops, justified Athanasius and his fellow sufferers. Among these was Marcellus of Ancyra, whose zeal against the Arians had provoked them to charge him with Sabellianism. It is not the design of this history to enlarge on these niceties. But it is easy to conceive how such a charge might be drawn up with specious appearances. Marcellus explained, and was cleared to the satisfaction of the council; but whether justly or not, is not so evident. The progress of error is easy, where the heart is not simply stayed upon God. Athanasius himself was afterwards far from being convinced of his soundness in the faith.

Julius wrote a public letter on this occasion, in which, after doing full justice to the sufferers, he concludes in a manner not unworthy of a Christian bishop, not threatening, but advising those of the East not to do the like for the future, lest, says he, we be exposed to the laughter of Pagans, and above all to the wrath of God, to whom we must all give an account at the day of judgment.

In the year 347, a council was held at Sardica by the joint order of the two emperors, Constantius and Constans, the latter being as steady in the support of the Nicene faith as the former was in opposition. Sardica was in Illyria, the border of the dominions of the two emperors. The intention was to unite, but it actually separated the two parties more than ever. Prayer and holy breathings of soul, and judicious and affectionate preaching of practical religion, were now at a low ebb. Peaceable spirits were absorbed in superstition, turbulent

Council at
Sardica,
A. D. 347.

* Fleury, B. XII. 21.

ones in ecclesiastical contentions. The life of faith was little known. They treated the doctrine of the Trinity as a mere speculation, and the result of their disputes was, that each party retired as they entered upon them. The Easterns finding that it was likely to be a free council, departed from it, leaving the Westerns to settle matters as they pleased. Hosius of Corduba, the venerable president of Nice, presided here also, and the Athanasian cause was decided in the favour of the Alexandrian prelate. They made also some canons, in which they condemned the translation of bishops. The pious and zealous spirit of Hosius was chiefly concerned in these things. Remarkable are the words: "A pernicious custom must be rooted out. None have been found to pass from a greater bishopric to a less. Therefore they are induced by avarice and ambition." So reasoned and so ordained this council. But where the religion of the Holy Ghost, the religion of faith, hope, and charity, exist not, the canons of councils forbid in vain. There are several canons also which enjoin the residence of bishops, and which forbid their journeys to courts. The time also of bishops remaining in another diocese was fixed, in order to prevent the surplanting of their brethren. These things show the times: rules are not made, except to prevent abuses, which already exist.

The Easterns met at Philippopolis, in Thrace, and excommunicated their brethren of the West; and for some time the two parties remained distant in this manner; while in Asia and Egypt the friends of the Nicene faith were treated with great cruelty. Into Europe, the subtleties of this contention had not yet entered; men were there more simple, and followed the primitive faith in quietness and peace.*

In Antioch the Arian bishop Stephen was found, even by his own party, too corrupt and profligate to be continued in his dignity. Leontius, who succeeded him, supported the Arian cause. Diodorus, an ascetic, and Flavian, afterwards bishop of Antioch, stirred up the faithful to a zeal for religion, and passed whole nights with them at the tombs of the martyrs. Leontius finding them to have the affection of the people, wished them to do this service in the church. And here I ap-

prehend was a nursery of real godliness, but the account is very imperfect.

In the year 349 died Gregory, the secular bishop of Alexandria, as he may be justly called. Then it was that Constantius, intimidated by the threats of his brother Constans, wrote repeatedly to Athanasius to return into the East, and to assure him of his favour and protection. The exiled prelate could not easily credit a

Death of
Gregory
bishop of
Alexan-
dria,

A. D. 349.

man who had persecuted him so unrighteously. At length he complied, and after visiting Julius at Rome, who sent a letter full of tenderness to the church of Alexandria in favour of Athanasius, he travelled to Antioch, where Constantius then was, by whom he was very graciously received. The emperor requested him to forget the past, and assured him with oaths, that he would receive no calumnies against him for the future. While Athanasius was at Antioch, he communicated with the Eustathians, who under the direction of Flavian held a conventicle there. This same Flavian was the first who composed the doxology, "Glory be to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost;" and in the singing of the Psalms, not only those who frequented his meeting made use of it, but in general all who favoured the Nicene faith in the church of Leontius did the same, in opposition to the Arian doxology, Glory to the Father, by the Son, in the Holy Ghost. So earnest were the two parties against each other. Leontius was a confirmed Arian, but of a milder temper than the rest of his party. He saw that it was by force only that he was in possession of his church; numbers of people still professing the Nicene faith. He dared not therefore oppose the Trinitarian hymns, and laboured to preserve peace in his own time; but touching his white hair, he said on the occasion, "When this snow shall melt, there will be much dirt," hinting at the dissensions which he imagined would arise after his death.

Athanasius
goes to
Antioch.

Constantius observed to Athanasius, that as he now put him into possession of all his Egyptian churches, he ought to leave one for the Arians. The Alexandrian prelate confessed it would be just, on condition also that the same liberty was allowed to the Eustathians at Antioch. The Arian party, however, sensible of the superior popularity of their op-

* Fleury, C. 43.

posers, thought it most prudent to wave the proposal.*

The return of Athanasius to Alexandria was a triumph. Religious zeal and joy

Athanasius returns to Alexandria.

appeared in the garb of the age, by a number devoting themselves to a monastic life.

Acts of mercy and liberality were also abundantly per-

formed. Every house seemed to be a church set apart for prayer. Such are the views which Athanasius himself gives us of the effects of his restoration:† a number of his enemies retracted, and justified him in the most honourable manner, and among these the recantation of Ursatius and Valens is remarkable. Asclepas was also restored to Gaza, and Marcellus to Ancyra, though the latter was not unimpeached. The suspicion of his unsoundness was perhaps justly increased by the less ambiguous sentiments of Photinus bishop of Saragum, who was supposed to tread in his steps, and was in a council at that place deposed as a Sabellian by universal consent. Germanius an Arian was elected in his stead, and then, as well as at this day, the Sabellians and the Arians in opposing each other assaulted the truth, which lay between them: the former removing all distinction between the Father and the Son, the latter establishing a distinction which took away the Trinity of the Godhead. Each desired to remove the mystery from the doctrine, and in the attempt corrupted it. While those who were taught of God, and were content with inadequate ideas, sincerely worshipped the Trinity in Unity, and mourned over the abominations of the times.

A great change in civil affairs having taken place by the death of Constant, and the ruin of the usurper Magnentius, Con-

Martyrdom of Paul of Constantinople.

A. D. 351.

stantius, now sole master of the empire, revived the persecution. About the year 351, Paul of Constantinople was

sent into Mesopotamia, loaded with irons, and of length to

Cucusus on the confines of Cappadocia. There, after suffering cruel hardships, he was strangled.‡ Mucronius by an armed force, attended with much effusion of blood, took possession of the son. Paul received the crown of

martyrdom, and the Arians seemed ambitious to equal the bloody fame of Galerius.

The weak mind of Constantius was again prejudiced by absurd calumnies against Athanasius, and a council at Milan was convened in the year 355, in the presence of the emperor, who proposed to them an Arian creed, which

Council at Milan, A. D. 355.

he recommended by this argument, that God had declared in his favour by his victories. Prosperity, it seems, had not strengthened his reasoning powers, but, unhappily had increased the depravity of his heart. Here appeared the magnanimous constancy of Lucifer, bishop of Cagliari in Sardinia, and the pious self-denial of Eusebius, bishop of Vercelle in Italy. These prelates were animated with a sincere spirit of piety on this occasion, and answered that the Nicene faith had always been the faith of the Church. "I ask not your advice, says the emperor, and you shall not hinder me from following Arius, if I think fit." The emperor's creed was read in the Church; but the people, more sincere and more simple than the great, and more willingly attached to the doctrines of the Trinity, because they read it in their Bibles, rejected the faith of Constantius, and it was not pressed any farther.

The condemnation of Athanasius was, however, insisted on, and Dionysius bishop of Milan, and the two others just mentioned, were most unreasonably required to subscribe to it. "Obey, or be banished," was the imperious mandate. The bishops lifted up their hands to heaven, and told Constantius, that the empire was not his, but God's, and reminded him of the day of judgment. He drew his sword on them in a rage, but contented himself with ordering their banishment. Hilary the deacon was stripped and scourged, and ridiculed by Ursatius and Valens, who had recanted sometime ago. Hilary blessed God, and bore the indignity as a Christian. The greatest part of the bishops subscribed to the condemnation of Athanasius: a few only testified that the grace of God was still as powerful as ever, in supporting his people, and in causing them to suffer gladly, rather than to sin. Others, besides the three mentioned above, joined in the same measure, particularly Maximus, bishop of Naples, who was tortured in hopes of forcing his submission, because of the weakness of his body. In the end he was banished, and died in exile.

* Sozomen, B. III. c. 20.

† Adam. ad Solit. See Fleury, B. XII. c. 52.

‡ Theodoret, B. XI. c. 5.

Eusebius of Vercellæ was sent into Palestine, Lucifer into Syria, and Dionysius into Cappadocia, where he died soon after. Liberius of Rome was in an advanced age, when the storm which had murmured at a distance, burst upon him: He was carried before Constantius at Milan, where the eunuch Eusebius, the secret and prevalent supporter of Arianism, assisted the emperor in oppressing him. Liberius said, "Though I were single, the cause of the faith would not fail: there was a time when three persons only were found who resisted a regal ordinance." Eusebius understanding his allusion to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, answered, "Do you make the emperor a Nebuchadnezzar?" "No, said the bishop of Rome, but you are not less unreasonable than he, in desiring to condemn a man unheard." In the conclusion Liberius was banished into Thrace. But a character still more venerable than his was yet unsubdued, and the Arians, fiercely pursuing their victories, proceeded to the attack. Hosius, bishop of Corduba in Spain, was now a hundred years old. He was looked on as the first of bishops, had been a confessor under the Dioclesian persecution, had presided sixty years in the Church, had guided the Nicene council, had been a principle person in the appointment of canons, and was held in universal respect. Constantius and the whole Christian party were sensible of the importance of such a character. Flattery and menaces were both employed to prevail on him to condemn Athanasius. A few lines of his answer to an imperious letter of the emperor's may give us some idea of his spirit: "I confessed the first time in the persecution under Maximian, your great-grandfather. If you likewise desire to persecute me, I am ready still to suffer any thing rather than betray the truth. It is not so much a personal malice against Athanasius, as the love of heresy which influences these men. I myself invited them to come to me, and declare at the council of Sardica what they knew against him. They dared not; they all refused. Athanasius came afterwards to your court at Antioch: he desired his enemies might be sent for, that they might make good their accusations. Why do you still hearken to them who refused such fair proposals? How can you endure Ursatius and Valens, after

they have recanted and acknowledged their calumny in writing? Remember you are a mortal man; be afraid of the day of judgment. God hath given you the empire, and hath committed the church to our care. I write thus through my concern for your eternal welfare; but with respect to your requisition, I cannot agree with Ariana, nor write against Athanasius. You act for his enemies, but in the day of judgment you must defend yourself alone." Constantius kept him a year at Sirmium, without respect to his age and infirmities. His orders addressed to the bishops were to condemn Athanasius, and to communicate with the Arians under pain of banishment. The judges were directed to see to the execution of these things. Ursatius and Valens, whose instability should have destroyed their credit, assisted the persecution by informations: zealous heretics by force of arms were intruded in the place of the exiled; and Arianism seemed well nigh to have avenged the cause of fallen idolatry.

The adventures of Athanasius himself in his sufferings were extraordinary. He was for some time preserved in the house of a pious woman with great care and fidelity. But we must not enlarge on the various hardships to which he was exposed: suffice it to mention some of the particular circumstances. Syrianus, a secular officer, came at night to his principal church at Alexandria, when the people were intent on their devotions. Numbers were murdered, others insulted and beaten. The intrepid prelate sat still in his chair, and directed the deacon to sing the cxxxvth Psalm, the people answering, according to the custom of alternate singing, "For his mercy endureth for ever." Which being finished, he bade the people return to their houses. As the soldiers advanced toward him, his clergy and people begged him to depart, which he refused, thinking it his duty to stay till they had all left the church. He was in a manner forced out by the clergy and monks, and conveyed safe from the guards. An unavailing protest was made by the people against these violence.

The Pagans took courage, and assisted the heretics in the persecution, saying, the Arians have embraced our religion.*

* Athan. ad Solit.

* Athan. ad Solit.

George of Cappadocia chosen by the Arians to be bishop in the place of Athanasius.

A. D. 356.

having been severely scourged, was sent to the mines, without being allowed time to dress his wounds, and he died on the road. Venerable, aged bishops were sent into the deserts throughout Egypt, and Arianism reigned and glutted itself in blood. The episcopal office was sold to unworthy men; the profession of Arianism being the only requisite for the office. The cruelties of George provoked the Alexandrians to retaliation, but military force prevailed; and after this bishop had been once expelled, he returned still more terrible and more detested.

So deplorably misinformed was Constantius, that in a letter to the people of Alexandria, he represents this same George as one who was very capable of instructing others in heavenly things. Athanasius having obtained a sight of this letter, was at length deterred from his intended journey to the emperor, and betook himself to the deserts, and visited the monks, his most faithful adherents, who refused to discover him to his persecuting adversaries, and offered their throats to the sword, being ready to die for the Nicene faith. He filled up another part of his time in writing his own apology to Constantius. There are in it strong traces of that rapid eloquence and clear reasoning, for which this father is renowned. Integrity and fervour appear throughout; but it were to be wished, that less zeal on his own account, and more on account of his Divine Master, were visible in this as well as in his other writings. In truth, the connexion of the doctrine of the Trinity with the honour of Christ, and with lively faith in his mediation, is as plain, that practical, serious, humble religion, if it exist at all in any scene of controversy, must be found on that side. Men, who degrade the Divine Saviour into a creature, will of course exalt themselves, and cannot have that humility and faith which are the essential ingredients of a holy life. I gladly remind my readers, and myself, that the value of the apostolical doctrines,

so fiercely persecuted in the fourth century, rests not on speculation, but on the holy tendency of their nature. There is sufficient proof of the existence of this holy tendency and influence, both in regard to Athanasius and other Trinitarians of that time; and there is also more than sufficient proof of the contrary tendency of the doctrines supported by the Arians. But it must be allowed that the evidence of the former sort is scanty: Christian godliness continued very low in all this period; and good men in their writings and reflections attended too little to the connexion which subsists between doctrine and practice.

Eusebius of Vercellæ, one of the most honest and pious bishops of those times, still suffered severely in Palestine in his banishment. The persecution reached even to Gaul, which had yet happily preserved the simplicity of apostolical confession unmolested. In Constantinople, Macedonius, by the terror of his persecutions, drove those of the general church and the Novatian dissenters, into a sympathy for each other, which their mutual prejudices had long prevented. Both sorts suffered extremely, being obliged to communicate with Arians, or to undergo a variety of hardships. Agellius, the Novatian bishop, fled. A priest and a monk of theirs were tortured, and the latter died by this usage. Novatianism still retained a measure of the divine Spirit, and was honoured with furnishing those who suffered for Jesus. This* people had three churches in Constantinople, one of which was thrown down by the emperor's orders. The Novatians carried away the materials to the other side of the sea: the women and children wrought diligently, and thus it was rebuilt. In the next reign, by the emperor's permission, they carried back the materials, and rebuilt their church at Constantinople, and called it ANASTATIA.† An attempt was now made to re-unite those of the general church with the Novatians: the former were the more ready, because they had no place of worship at all; but the narrow bigotry, which had ever been the great fault of Novatianism, prevented the union. But we must now mention a remarkable instance of human infirmity, which calls at once for compassion and for caution. Hosius had been a year confined at Sir-

* Sozomen, R. IV. c. 30.

† That is, "Risen again."

minum, his relations were persecuted, and he suffered in his own person both scourges and tortures. By thus afflicting him, the Arian tyrant thought he served the cause; and by such inhuman measures were the patrons of the heresy stimulated to seek the destruction of Godliness! Yet so infatuated was the spirit of Constantius, that he all along was liberally supporting the most expensive forms and ornaments of Christian worship, while he was labouring with all his might to eradicate Christian doctrine.

Conduct of the venerable Hosius.

Hosius, above a hundred years old, submitted at length to subscribe an Arian creed, but the condemnation of Athanasius he would not vindicate.

Permitted at length to return into Spain, he lived, however, to retract, protesting against the violence with which he had been treated, and with his last breath exhorting all men to reject the heresy of Arius; and thus we have seen to his end the most venerable character of that age, still in his heart true to his God. The length of his days only exposed him to a greater variety of suffering, and though Satan's malice was permitted to do him much mischief, he yet was enabled to die in peace, and to prove that the Lord faileth not them that are his.

In the same year, 357, Liberius of Rome, after two years exile, was not only prevailed on to receive an Arian creed, but even to reject Athanasius.

Liberius of Rome joins the Arians, A. D. 357.

The subscription to the creed was not so much an evidence of insincerity, as was the condemnation of the Alexandrian prelate, because the Arians,

fertile in expedients, made creeds upon creeds, expressed in artful ambiguities, to impose on the unwary. Liberius by these unworthy means recovered his bishopric. The see of Rome at that time had secular charms sufficient to seduce a worldly mind. Whether Liberius cordially repented of his hypocrisy or not, we have no evidence. The cruelty of the Arians tried to the utmost the hearts of men in those days, and now the proverb was verified, "All the world against Athanasius, and Athanasius against all the world."

But the power of divine grace was displayed during this disastrous season in preserving a remnant, and particularly in strengthening the mind of that great man, through a long course of afflictions. He

composed about this time a letter to the monks, in which he confesses the extreme difficulty of writing concerning the divinity of the Son of God, though it be easy to confute the heretics. He owns his ignorance, and calls himself a mere babbler, and beseeches the brethren to receive what he wrote, not as a perfect explanation of the divinity of the Word, but as a confutation of the enemies of that doctrine.

Two councils were held, the one at Rimini, the other at Seleucia, both with a view to support Arianism. In the former a number of good men were artfully seduced, by the snares of the Arians, to agree to what they did not understand. This sect, now victorious every where, began to show itself disunited, and to separate into two parties. But it is not worth while to trouble the reader with idle niceties, in which proud men involved themselves, while all had forsaken the simple faith of antiquity. In these confusions, Macedonius

lost the see of Constantinople, which was given to Eudexius, translated from Antioch, in the year 360. Constantius poorly endeavoured to atone for the corruptions both of principle and practice, with which he filled the church, by offering large vessels of gold and silver, carpets for the altar of gold tissue, adorned with precious stones, curtains of gold and divers colours for the doors of the church, and also liberal donatives to the clergy, the virgins, and the widows.*

In the meantime Christendom throughout groaned under the weight of extorted Arian subscriptions; and Macedonius, the deposed bishop of Constantinople, formed another sect of those who were enemies to the divinity of the Holy Ghost. These, by the advantage of sober manners, spread themselves among the monasteries, and increased the corruption which then pervaded the Christian world. But the vigilant spirit of Athanasius was stirred up to oppose this heresy also. "The Father cannot be Son, nor the Son Father, (says he) and the Holy Ghost is never called by the name of Son, but is called the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. The holy Trinity is but one divine nature, and one God, with which a crea-

Eudexius is made patriarch of Constantinople,

A. D. 360.

ture cannot be joined. This is sufficient for the faithful. Human knowledge goes no farther: the cherubims veil the rest with their wings."

The see of Antioch being vacant, Meletius, bishop of Sebasta, a man of exemplary meekness and piety, was chosen. The Arians supposed him to be of their party. Constantius ordered the new bishop to preach before him on the controversial subject of the Trinity: Meletius delivered himself with Christian sincerity, rebuked the rashness of men, who strove to fathom the divine nature, and exhorted his audience to adhere to the simplicity of the faith. He had remained only a month in Antioch, and had the honour to be banished by the emperor, who filled up the see with Euzoius, the old friend of Arius. In consequence of this, the friends of Meletius separated from the Arians, and held their assemblies in the ancient church, which had been the first at Antioch. Besides the Arians, who were in possession of the emperor's favour, there were two parties both sound in the Nicene faith, the Eustathians, before spoken of, and the Meletians, who testified in the strongest manner their regard for their exiled pastor. In the year

361, however, Constantius died, having received baptism a little before he expired, from Euzoius; for, after his father's example, he had deferred it till this time.* His character needs no detail: it appeared from his case, that a weak man, armed with despotic power, was capable of doing incredible mischief in the Church of Christ.

CHAPTER V.

A VIEW OF MONASTICISM AND OTHER MISCELLANEOUS CIRCUMSTANCES, FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHRISTIANITY UNDER CONSTANTINE, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.

It seemed most convenient to preserve the connexion of the Arian controversy without interruption. If the evangelical

* A fact related of him by Theodoret enables us to fix the religious character of this prince. When he was going to carry on war with Magnus, he exhorted all his soldiers to receive baptism, observing the danger of dying without that sacred rite, and ordering those to return home who refused to submit to

reader has not gained much information concerning the spirit of true religion, during this violent contest, the times and the materials must bear the blame. There were probably, in that whole period, many sincere souls, who mourned in secret over the abominations of the age; but history, ever partial to the great, and dazzled with the splendour of kings and bishops, condescends not to notice them. The people of God were in lower life, and remain, therefore, unknown. We left Athanasius in the desert, where he employed the leisure, which the iniquity of the persecution gave him, in visiting the monks. He had been acquainted with their most renowned leader Anthony, but had not the satisfaction to meet with him again, he dying in the beginning of the year 356. Let us leave Athanasius and the Arian controversy awhile, and see what we can find concerning the monks, and other particulars of the dealings of God with his Church in the mean time.

We are not to form an idea of ancient monks from modern ones. It was a mistaken thing in holy men of old to retire altogether from the world. But there is every reason to believe the mistake originated in piety. We often hear it said, How ridiculous to think of pleasing God by asceticism and solitude! Far be it from me to vindicate the superstitions of monks, and particularly the vows of celibacy. But the error is very natural, has been reprehended much too severely, and the profaneness of men of the world is abundantly more dangerous. The enormous evils of Monasticism are to be ascribed to its degeneracy in after times, not to its first institution. What could, for instance, be better intentioned, than the determination of Anthony to follow literally our Lord's rule, "Sell what thou hast, and give to the poor!" Say that he was ignorant and superstitious; he was both: but he persevered to the age of a hundred and five years in voluntary poverty with admirable consistency. Surely it could be no slight cause that could move a young person of opulence to part with all, and live in the abstinence of a solitary life with such unshaken perseverance. Let us, from the

Death of
Anthony
the Monk,
A. D. 356.

it. Not infidelity, but superstition, predominated in his mind. Yet how inconsistent, to defer his own baptism so long!

memorials of his life, written by Athanasius, omitting the miracles which the then fashionable credulity imposed on men, endeavour to collect, as far as we can, a just idea of his spirit.

Athanasius tells us that he had often seen him, and had received information concerning him from his servant. It was a great disadvantage to Anthony's judgment, that he was unwilling to be instructed in literature. There is a medium in all things secular. We have seen numbers corrupted by an excess of literary attachments: we see here one misled by the want of proper cultivation. When a youth, he had heard read in the church our Lord's words to the rich young man, and his ignorance led him to sell all, and give to the poor, and enter into the monastic life. Monks, as yet, had not learned to live in perfect deserts unconnected with mankind, and hitherto they lived at a small distance from their own village. Anthony endeavoured to form himself on the severest models, and pushed the genius of solitude to rigours before unknown. His fame increased; he was looked on as a mirror of perfection, and the Egyptians were studious to follow his example. His instructions to those who listened to him are not, in general, worth transcribing. The faith of Christ is very obscure, at least in the best of them; yet his sincerity is evident; his love to divine things must have been ardent; his conflicts and temptations, which are confusedly written by Athanasius, demonstrated a mind too humble, and knowing too much of himself, to trust in his own righteousness. He preached well by his life, and temper, and spirit, however he might fail in doctrinal knowledge.

In the persecution by Dioclesian he left his beloved solitude, and came to Alexandria, strengthening the minds of Christian sufferers, exposing himself to danger for the love of the brethren, and yet not guilty of the excess of delivering up himself to martyrdom. In all this there was what was better than the monk,—the sincere and charitable Christian. Nor did he observe to perfection the rules of solitude. There were two sorts of monks, the solitary, and those who lived in societies. Anthony, though he had a strong inclination to follow the first sort altogether, sometimes joined the latter, and even on some occasions appeared in the world.

The Arian heresy gave him another opportunity of showing his zeal. He again entered Alexandria and protested against its impiety, which, he observed, was of a piece with heathenism itself. "Be assured," said he, "all nature is moved with indignation against those who reckon on the Creator of all things to be a creature." And this is one circumstance, which convinces me, that genuine godliness, the offspring of Christian principles, must have been with the primitive monks, because they generally vindicated the Nicene faith, and could not endure Arianism. They must, many of them at least, have felt the motions of the divine life, which will not connect itself with any principles that depreciate the dignity of Jesus Christ.

In conversing with Pagan philosophers, he observed, that Christianity held the mystery, not in the wisdom of Grecian reasoning, but in the power of faith supplied to them from God by Jesus Christ. "Faith," says he, "springs from the affection of the mind; Logic from artificial contrivance. Those who have the energy that is by faith, need not perhaps the demonstration that comes by reasoning." He very justly appealed to the glorious fruits of Christianity in the world, and exhorted the philosophers "to believe and know that the Christian art is not merely verbal, but of faith which worketh by love, with which ye being once endowed, shall not need demonstrations by arguments, but shall deem these words of Anthony sufficient to lead you to the faith of Christ."

The evangelical reader will see here something better than mere monasticism.* But he sullied all this by a foolish attempt, to make mankind believe, that he lived without food, while he ate in secret, and by a vain parade of conversation concerning temperance, which savoured more of Pythagorean fanaticism than of Christian piety. In his extreme old age he gave particular directions, that his body should be interred, not preserved in a house after the Egyptian manner of honouring deceased saints and martyrs, and charged his two attendants to let no man know the place of his burial. "At the resurrection of the dead I shall receive

* Possibly the attentive reader may observe, without my mentioning it, that I have seen, on a closer inspection, reason to think better of Anthony, than from the short account of him in p. 243, one might seem to conclude.

my body," says he, "from the Saviour inescapable." He guarded his friends against the Arian heresy, and bade them not be disturbed, though the judicial power, an imaginary fading domination, should be against them. "Do ye observe what ye have received from the fathers, and particularly the pious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, which ye have heard from the Scriptures, and of which I have often reminded you. Divide my clothes in this manner: Give one of my sheep-skins to the bishop Athanasius, together with the garment which I received from him when new, and now return him when old. And give the other sheep-skin to Serapion the bishop. The sackcloth keep for yourselves," says he to his two attendants. "Farewell, children, Anthony is going, and is no more with you." He stretched out his feet, and appearing pleased at the sight of his friends coming to him, he expired with evident marks of cheerfulness on his face. His last will was punctually executed. Such was the death of this father of monasticism: the account is taken wholly from his Life by Athanasius, and is a monument of the genuine piety and deep superstition both of the monk and his biographer. Such was the state of godliness in those times, existing obscure in hermitages; while abroad in the world the Gospel was almost buried in faction and ambition; yet probably in ordinary life it thrived the best in some instances, though quite unknown.

By the assistance of Fleury, it would be easy to enlarge the history of men of this sort. There were others of great monastic renown in the time of Anthony. But their narratives, if true, are neither entertaining nor instructive, and a great part of them at least is stuffed with extravagant fables. Let us turn to other objects. At the time when the bishops were travelling to the council of Nice, Eusebius, bishop of Cesarea in Cappadocia, by his way thither, arrived at a small town called Nazianzum in Cappadocia. There he met with Gregory, afterwards bishop of Nazianzum, who applied for baptism. This man had led a life of great moral strictness, belonging to a particular sect, who observed the Sabbath and a distinction of meats like the Jews. His wife Nonna was an exemplary Christian, and was very instrumental in her husband's conversion. There is reason to hope it was a conversion from self-righteous pride to the humble faith of Jesus. Lici-

nus instructed him: he received baptism, and some years afterwards, was made bishop of the place, and remained in that office forty-five years, to an extreme old age. Though advanced in years, when he applied himself to Christian learning, he acquired a just discernment, preserved his flock from the spreading infection of Arianism, and mollified the manners of the barbarous people. Possibly the memoirs of his pastoral labours, if we had them, might be found more instructive than most of the subjects which engage our attention in this period. Gregory's episcopal character commenced about the year 328. And this tribute seemed due to his memory and to that of his wife, not only on their own accounts, but also because they were the parents of the famous Gregory of Nazianzum, who in an oration celebrates their piety.

If we look to the situation of the ancient heretics, we find them in a dwindling state. The followers of Marcion, Valentinian, and the rest, still subsisted indeed, and an edict of Constantine forbade their assembling together. Under this act of Uniformity the Novatians were condemned also. Thus the best of the Dissenters were not permitted to worship in their own way, while the Donatists, the worst, were in a manner tolerated. But in vain do we look either for wisdom or equity in the ecclesiastical proceedings of Constantine or any of his family in general. Two only of the persecuted sects, the Meletians and the Donatists, were not mentioned in the edict, as far as one can judge, and, in consequence of this omission, they subsisted, and weathered the force of the decree. The old heresies were crushed, while the enthusiastic Montanists maintained their hold in their native Phrygia, and the Novatians remained still numerous, retaining narrow views of church discipline, and with these a considerable strictness of manners, and it is hoped, the good influence of the Divine Spirit. But we want better materials for the history of this people.

At the very time, when Athanasius was persecuted at Tyre, and was thought unworthy to live at Alexandria, the bishops were employed also in dedicating the church of the Holy Sepulchre at Jerusalem. Its magnificence was a monument of the ostentatious superstition of Constantine. It is foreign to our design to describe its expensive pomp. On this occasion, Jerusalem, which from the time

of Adrian had been called in *Ælia*,* recovered its name, became the resort of Christian pilgrims, was vainly represented by some as the new Jerusalem described by the prophets, and was held in great veneration by sermons, acts of liberality, and panegyrics on the emperor. In these things the historian Eusebius was signally distinguished. Here Arius was received; and thus that scripture was fulfilled concerning the hypocrisy of professors of religion in the Christian times, "Your brethren, that hated you, and cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the Lord be glorified."† The enmity against real godliness was varnished with a parade of external piety; pomp supplied the room of sincerity, and formality usurped the place of spiritual understanding.

Not long before his death, Constantine wrote to Anthony the monk, and begged an answer. The reflection which he made on the occasion showed at once his ignorance of secular affairs, and his knowledge of divine things. Be not astonished, says he, if an emperor writes to us. He is but a man: rather be astonished, that God should write a book for man, and deliver it to us by his own Son. He answered the emperor, desiring him not to esteem present things, to think of the future judgment, to remember that Jesus Christ is the true and eternal king; to be merciful, to do justice, and particularly to take care of the poor.

Under Constantius an attempt was made to re-unite the Donatists to the general church. The consequence was, that a number were formally recovered to it. The body of them remained, what they always were, an unworthy people, and they had among them a sort of wild licentious persons called *Circumcelliones*, who were very violent and ferocious in their conduct.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EXTENSION OF THE GOSPEL, FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE CENTURY, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTIUS.

THIS should be the favourite object of a Christian historian, and glad should I be to answer the most sanguine wishes of

the evangelical reader. But the period before us is far more fruitful in ecclesiastical contentions than remarkable for the extension of Christianity itself; and even the account which we have of the trophies of the Redeemer's death and resurrection, in the barbarous countries, is too mean and defective, to satisfy the laudable curiosity of those who love the progress of vital religion.

About the beginning of the century, a Tyrian philosopher, named *Monoprius*, possessed of the spirit of travelling, explored the interior parts of India.‡ He took with him two boys, his relations, who understood the Greek tongue. Arriving at a certain harbour, the natives murdered the whole company, except the two boys, who were presented to the king, and finding favour in his eyes, were promoted in his court. Upon the king's death, the queen dowager engaged them to superintend the affairs of the realm, and the education of the young prince. Their names were *Ædesius* and *Frumentius*. But the latter was prime minister.† The man, however, had his eyes fixed on higher objects than the politics of the country. He met with some Roman merchants, who traded there, and asked them if they found any Christians in the kingdom. Having discovered some by their means, he encouraged them to associate for the purposes of religious worship, and at length erected a church for their use, and certain natives, instructed in the Gospel, were converted to the faith. On the king's accession to the administration, *Frumentius* desired leave to return to his own country, which both the king and his mother were very reluctant to allow. He left the country, however, with *Ædesius*. The latter returned to his relations at Tyre, while *Frumentius*, arriving at Alexandria, communicated his adventures to *Athanasius* the

* I follow the narrative of *Socrates*, B. I. c. 19. But what he calls India, seems to have been the kingdom of *Abyssinia*, which at this day calls itself Christian, and glories in the evangelical labours of its first bishop *Frumentius*; though it appears, from the account of *Bruce*, in his voyage to discover the source of the Nile, to have long remained in the deepest ignorance and vice.

† *Bruce* would call him the *Ras*. The whole story carries a strong air of probability, from the resemblance of the customs in this Indian kingdom to those of *Abyssinia*, which seems to confirm the conjecture, that the India of *Socrates* was *Abyssinia*.

* *Ælia Capitolina*, because rebuilt by *Ælius Adrianus*.

† *Fleury*, B. XI. 54.

‡ *Isaiah* lxi. 5.

bishop, and informed him of the probability of evangelizing the country, if missionaries were sent thither. On mature consideration Athanasius told him, that none was so fit for the office as himself. He consecrated him, therefore, the first bishop of the Indians; and this active missionary, returning to a country where his integrity and capacity had already been distinguished, preached the Gospel with much success, and erected many churches. Thus was the Gospel planted in a barbarous kingdom, where the extreme ignorance of the natives would much facilitate its external progress at least, under the episcopal labours of a man who had educated their sovereign; then at least, most probably, there were many real conversions, and a time of copious effusion of the Spirit of God.* And the difficulty of access to this region, which has since proved so prejudicial to the advancement of knowledge among its inhabitants, was at that time a happy preservative to the infant church. It was in vain, that Constantius laboured to poison it with his beloved Arianism. He gave orders that Frumentius should be deposed, and that an Arian successor should be appointed; but the country was happily out of the reach of his imperial bigotry.

The Iberians were a people bordering on the Black Sea, who, in some military expedition, took prisoner a pious Christian woman, whose sanctity of manners engaged the respect of these barbarians. Socrates mentions several miracles which God wrought by her means.† The credibility of such divine interpositions much depends on the importance of circumstances. “*Nec Deus interit, nisi dignus vindictæ mores,*” is a rule of Horace full of good sense, and as applicable to theology as to poetry. What so likely to affect the minds of an ignorant people as miracles! The situation of things rendered it probable, that such divine interpositions might take place; but I shall mention only those, which may seem worthy of some credit. A child of the king’s was sent to

the women of the country to be cured, if any of them knew a proper method of treating it—a well-known ancient custom. The case baffled the skill of them all, and the child was committed to the captive woman. “Christ,” said she, “who healed many, will also heal this infant.” She prayed, and he recovered. In the same manner the queen herself was healed of a distemper some time after. “It is not my work,” said she, “but that of Christ the Son of God, the maker of the world.” The king sent her presents in token of his gratitude. But she sent them back, assuring him, that “godliness was her riches, and that she should look on it, as the noblest present, if he would worship the God whom she adored.” The next day the king was lost in hunting in a thick mist, and implored in vain the aid of his gods. In his distress, recollecting the words of the woman, he prayed to the God whom she worshipped. The mist was instantly dispersed, and the king found his way home. In consequence of this event, and of future conferences with the woman, both the king and queen embraced the Gospel, and exhorted their subjects to receive it. An embassy was sent to Constantine to desire that pastors might be commissioned to instruct them. The emperor gave the ambassadors a very gracious reception.

It is proper to add here, on the authority of Philostorgius, that Constantius sent ambassadors to the Sabæans of Arabia Felix, demanding that the Roman navigators and inhabitants might build Christian churches, and that he furnished them with money for the purpose. Theophilus, an Indian, who had long been with Constantine in the capacity of a hostage, was ordained bishop by Eusebius of Nicomedia, and sent among the Sabæans; he erected churches, and spread at least the name of Christianity to a certain degree.

The ecclesiastical accounts of Britain are so fabulous, or at best so scanty, that it is a pleasure to be able to relate any thing that has the marks of historical authenticity. At the council of Ariminum, held on account of the Arian heresy, the emperor Constantius gave orders to supply the expenses of the bishops out of the public treasury. While the rest accepted the imperial munificence, the bishops of Gaul and Britain thought it unbecoming the ecclesiastical character to receive secular maintenance, and bore their own

* The absolute despotism of the Abyssinian prince, and the probability that the Sovereign before us received Christianity, would account for the establishment of the Gospel through the whole country. And the marvellous situation and profound ignorance of Abyssinia will account for the continuance of nominal Christianity to this day.

† B. I. c. 20.

expenses. Only three from Britain were so poor, that they were unable to maintain themselves. Their brethren offered by a contribution to supply their wants; but they chose rather to be obliged to the emperor's bounty, than to burthen their brethren. Gavidius, a French bishop, reproached them for this; but Severus, the relater of the story, thinks it was a circumstance much redounding to their credit.* So I apprehend it will appear to the reader, and we regret that where there are such evident vestiges of primitive and disinterested simplicity, we should know so little of the lives and characters of men quite remote from the scenes of ecclesiastical turbulence and ambition. Probably in our island the Gospel flourished at this time in humble obscurity.

Christianity was spreading itself beyond the Roman empire. The nations bordering on the Rhine, with the remotest parts of France, were now Christian; and the Goths near the Danube, about sixty years before, had been civilized at least, by the Christian religion, through the bishops whom they had carried captive under Gallienus; and most probably the Spirit of God was with their labours. Armenia under its king Tiridates had embraced Christianity,† and by means of commerce had conveyed it into Persia, where Christians began to be numerous.

But there they sustained a very grievous persecution from king Sapor, in the time of Constantine; a long account of which we have in Sozomen.‡ The reader has seen many things of the same kind in former persecutions; I shall only observe therefore in general, that thousands chose rather to suffer for the name of Christ, than to pollute themselves with the worship of the sun; that the Magi and the Jews were peculiarly instrumental in this persecution; and that the people of God suffered here with so much sincerity and fortitude, as to evince that the Lord had many people belonging to himself in Persia.

* Sulpit. Sev. B. II. c. 55.

† Armenia had probably long before been in some measure evangelized. It was not, however, till the commencement of this century that Gregory, surnamed The Enlightener, established the Gospel there. Through his means Tiridates and all his nobles were brought over to the profession of Christianity. He was consecrated bishop of Armenia by Leontius bishop of Cappadocia. Mosheim, Cent. IV.

‡ B. II. c. 9, &c.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DECLINE OF IDOLATRY IN THIS CENTURY, TO THE DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.

It was the character of the ancient Romans to be excessively superstitious. While their arms prospered through Europe and Asia, they were vigilant and punctual in all the offices of their religion, and studious of adopting the gods of the nations whom they conquered, as well as their improvements in arts and sciences. This religious spirit was the nurse at least, if not the parent, of many social virtues; industry, frugality, valour, and patriotism, coalesced with superstition. With the learning of Greece, at length, her philosophical scepticism and Epicurean profaneness were incorporated into the Roman commonwealth, and were attended with their usual vices of luxury and dissipation. The vulgar still believed, as senators and equestrians were wont to do; the college of Augurs, the whole apparatus of idolatry, remained in all their pomp and formality; and the greatest noblemen thought themselves dignified by the priesthood, while they inwardly despised what they professed with fictitious reverence.

Little did they think, when a few fishermen and mechanics of Judea began to preach Christ crucified, that the Christian religion was destined to overturn the idolatrous establishment of ages. By our present familiarity with Christian usages, and by the perfect annihilation of Pagan phenomena, we are not prepared to admire so much the work of God in the propagation of his own religion, as it deserves. Were the matter fully considered, it would strike every mind with conviction, that the hand of the Lord hath done this. That zeal, which philosophy had cooled, revived in the minds of polytheists, and produced persecution, as Christianity spread through the nations. A superstitious temper in many of the great and the learned succeeded to the sceptical turn of mind, and mere philosophers themselves, through carnal enmity and political selfishness, aided the intolerant spirit with all their might. We have seen how the Gospel still triumphed without secular support, and have already taken notice of one strong symptom of the decline of Paganism toward the end

of the second century, namely, that a new race of philosophers arose, who attempted to form an alliance with Christianity.

The Platonist School of Ammonius.

These new Platonists all owned Ammonius for their master, who, as Eusebius tells us, professed the Gospel to the end of his life. So plainly did Satan feel his inability to

crush the Gospel, that he was contented now with labouring to adulterate and undermine it. From this school proceeded Porphyry,* born at Tyre, whose life is written by Eunapius. He studied six years at Rome under Plotinus, whose *Life* he published. Socrates tells us,† that in his early days he was a Christian; but having been beaten by some Christians at Caesarea, through disgust he relinquished the Gospel. Its hold on his mind must have been extremely weak, when he could be induced to leave it because of the unworthy conduct of some nominal believers. But let Augustine's reflection be heard on this occasion, who thus addresses him: "If ever you had truly and cordially loved divine wisdom, you would have known Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God; nor would you ever have revolted from his most welcome humility, through the pride of vain knowledge."‡ There remain only some fragments of his fifteen books against the Christians. He shows in them the same malignant spirit which Celsus had, but with superior abilities; for his equity and learning were both very eminent.

In his old age he published a work on the Philosophy of Oracles, which has been deemed to be his, because he speaks in it very liberally of Christianity, and others sentiments which one would not expect from a man who had spent a long life in violent animosity against the followers of Jesus. This enmity is often as strong where it is covered, as when it is open; and circumstances will dictate a great variety in men's ways of showing or concealing it. During the Diocesian persecutions, philosophers were not ashamed to persecute. Hierocles has been mentioned, who as a magistrate tortured the Christians, and as a philosopher wrote against them. If he lived to see Celsus

Christianity established under Constantine, it is not improbable, provided he wrote at all on the subject, that he wrote as Porphyry does in the work before us. Worldly men are moved by good success to admire, by bad to condemn. Even their opinions are superficially swayed by these external things, and yet the latent frame of their spirits remains the same. Porphyry lived, we are told, to an advanced age; and as his work, styled the Philosophy of Oracles, points out the Gospel to be then the prevalent religion, it was probably his last production; and Eunapius owns he left sentiments in his last works different from the former. Yet he never seems with Ammonius to have professed Christianity since his early apostasy. But he confesses that the Barbarians were much in the right, and the Greeks in the wrong. He tells us of Apollo's oracular answers concerning Christ, that his soul after death was immortal, that he was pious and holy, though ignorant Christians do wrong to worship him. Augustine thinks,§ that these oracles were invented on purpose to disparage the Christians, by representing them as being allied with Satan. The oracle, whether carried on by Satanic or human fraud, or what seems nearest the truth, by both, would doubtless have a tendency by this means to asperse Christianity. At the same time to praise Christ and to blame his followers, may be conceived to be the natural language of an enemy of God, lying under some restraint; and it has been the common conduct of infidels in our days, who, had they lived in persecuting times, with Celsus would have as freely expressed their contempt of Christ as of his people. Christians are, however, represented by Porphyry as corrupt and erroneous, while their master is honoured as divine. From this view of Porphyry, one may learn something of the policy of Satan and his emissaries in the support of a dying cause. The decay of Paganism is evident, and the arts of philosophic infidelity were then what they are now. Men who know the value of divine truth should guard against these deceits, and not suffer themselves to be seduced by an ambiguous and insidious slander. At the same time the progress of error in proud men is strongly illustrated in the case of Porphyry. Men, who have no real experience of the pow-

* See Lardner's Collection, under the article of Porphyry. From him I have derived information on this subject, though obliged to dissent entirely from his opinion.

† B. III. c. 13.

‡ *Ibid.* c. 13.

§ Civit. Dei. B. XIX.

er of godliness, are easily induced to give up its form: if they be men of parts and learning, they are led from one delusion to another, till they advance to the farthest limit of malevolence and enmity. Checked they may be by circumstances, and may talk respectfully of Christ to the last; but unless humbled and brought to know themselves, they will live and die the same.

The first measures of Constantine, after this success in Italy, were to place Christianity on an equal footing with Paganism by the laws, while he gradually patronized the Church more and more. Among other improvements in the political and judiciary state of the empire, he abolished the barbarous punishment of crucifixion. After he was become sole master of the empire, he forbade the private exercise of divination, the great bulwark of false religion, still allowing the public use of it at the altars and temples; and sometime after he prohibited the worst branches of sorcery and magic.* He took particular care to secure the observation of the Lord's day, and ordered it to be set apart for prayer and holy exercises. He openly declared, that he would not oblige men to be Christians, though he earnestly desired they would become so; nor did he abolish the rites of the temples. Finding, however, the Pagans extremely obstinate in the preservation of their superstitions, he publicly exposed the mysteries which had hitherto been kept secret, melted down golden statues, and caused brazen ones to be drawn by ropes through the streets of Constantinople. And some of the temples which had been scenes of horrible wickedness he destroyed.

In Egypt, the famous cubit, with which the priests were wont to measure the height of the Nile, was kept in the temple of Serapis. This by Constantine's order was removed to the church at Alexandria. The Pagans beheld the removal with indignation, and ventured to predict, that the Nile would no longer overflow its banks. Divine Providence, however, favoured the schemes of Constantine, and the Nile the next year overflowed the country in an uncommon degree. In this gradual manner was Paganism overturned; sacrifices in a partial manner still

continued, but the entire destruction of idolatry seemed to be at hand. The temples stood for the most part, though much defaced and deprived of their former dignity and importance. The sons of Constantine trode in his steps, and gradually proceeded in the demolition of Paganism. Under them we find an express edict for the abolition of sacrifices.

Magnentius, the usurper, while master of Rome, allowed the Gentiles to celebrate their sacrifices in the night; but Constantius immediately after his victory took away this indulgence, and solemnly prohibited magic in all its various forms. He also took away the altar and image of Victory which stood in the portico of the Capitol. In truth, this emperor was by no means wanting in zeal against idolatry, though his unhappy controversial spirit in defence of Arianism rendered him rather an enemy than a friend to vital godliness.

Such was the state of Paganism at the death of Constantius. Pagans were, however, exceedingly numerous, and enjoyed with silent pleasure the long and shameful scenes of Arian controversy in the church. Nor were they hopeless. The eyes of the votaries of the gods were all directed to his successor, the warlike, the enterprising, the zealous Julian, a determined foe of the Gospel. Great things had been done for the church; but its rulers of the house of Constantine were weak, and void of true piety. In the warm imaginations of many zealous devotees, even Jupiter himself seemed likely to grow terrible again, and be again adored. This last struggle of expiring Paganism, marked as it is with signal instances of Providence, will deserve particular attention.

CHAPTER VIII.

JULIAN'S ATTEMPTS TO RESTORE IDOLATRY.

A GREATER zealot for Paganism than Julian is not to be found in the history of mankind. Temper, talents, power, and resentment, all conspired to cherish his superstitious attachments. It may serve to illustrate the providential care of God over his church, and by way of contrast it may heighten our ideas of that Gospel simplicity, with which we have seen divine truth to be supported and advanced,

* Cave's State of Paganism under the first Christian Emperors.

to behold the serpentine arts with which the prince of darkness was permitted to attempt the restoration of his kingdom by the hand of Julian. For I can by no means subscribe to the character, which Moshelm* gives us of the mediocrity of his genius. Whoever duly attends to the plan which he formed to subvert Christianity, will see the union of a solid judgment with indefatigable assiduity. Neither address nor dexterity was wanted. All that the wit and prudence of man could do was attempted. He was highly superstitious indeed, and addicted to magic beyond all bounds. Nor are these, as Moshelm thinks, any tokens of natural meanness of spirit. Alexander the Great was as magnanimous by nature as any of the sons of men; yet was he as superstitious as Julian himself. The desire of weighing characters in modern scales, is apt to betray men of learning into a false judgment both of persons and things. Let it then fairly be allowed, what indeed his works and actions in general, as well as his artful and judicious opposition to the Gospel, evince, that Julian was a man of very great parts and endowments. He died about the same age with Alexander: neither of them had attained that maturity of judgment, which full experience gives to the human mind. And yet in them both the world beheld uncommon exertions of genius and capacity. If Julian failed, let it be remembered, that his arms were levelled against Heaven; and it is of no service to Christianity, to depreciate the talents of its enemies.

Constantine ought to have reflected, that his cruelty and injustice in sacrificing the relations of Julian, he excited his hatred against Christianity. The case of Julian deserves consideration, though it cannot admit of apology. What had he need excellent or cowardly in the effects of the Gospel on his uncle or cousins? What a prospect did he behold in the face of the Christian church, torn with factions, and debased by ambition! The same vices under which the heathen world groaned, appeared but too visible at present among Christians. These things, joined with the resentment of family wrongs, determined him early in life in favour of the old religion. He was made a public reader in the church of Nicomedia, and affected a zeal for Christianity during the greatest part of the reign of Constantine. Had he

read the New Testament with attention, and prayed over it with seriousness, he might have seen that the doctrines there inculcated led to a conduct very opposite to that which he beheld in the then leaders of the Christian world, both civil and ecclesiastical. A tenth part of the study, which he employed on the profane classics, might have sufficed for this. But like many infidels in all ages, he does not seem to have paid any attention to the Scriptures, nor even to have known what their doctrines really are. From his youth he practised dissimulation with consummate artifice. One Maximus, a noted philosopher and magician, confirmed him in his pagan views; he secretly held correspondence with Libanius, the pagan sophist; and openly attempted to erect a church; he studied all day, and sacrificed at night. He offered up his prayers in the church in public, and at midnight rose to perform his devotions to Mercury. His residence at Athens completed his knowledge of the fashionable philosophy; in fine, no person was ever more admirably qualified to act the part which he did, when he succeeded Constantine.

This happened in the year 361. He ordered the temples to be set open, those that were decayed to be repaired, and new ones to be built, where there was a necessity. He fined the persons who had made use of the materials of the temples which had been demolished, and set apart the money, this way collected, for the erection of new ones. Altars were every where set up, and the whole machinery of Paganism was again brought into use. Altars and fires, blood, perfumes, and priests attending their sacrifices, were every where visible, and the imperial palace itself had its temple and furniture. The first thing he did every morning was to sacrifice, and by his presence and example he encouraged the practice among all his subjects. Heathenism held up its head, and Christians were every where insulted. He repealed the laws made against idolatry, and confirmed its ancient honours and privileges. But laws are the least part of what it behooves princes to do, who mean to encourage religion. A plan of conduct, an earnestness of principle, and a system of manners, are needful to support any religious tenets.* The Author,

Julian succeeds Constantine, A. D. 361.

* Mosh. Ecclesiast. Cent. iv.

* Cave's State of Paganism under Julian. This writer has given so clear and masterly a

mentioned below, has with great clearness illustrated the methods of Julian. Change the object, and let true religion be promoted, instead of false, and Julian will preach usefully to Christian princes, and shame the criminal indifference to all piety, which clouds the greatest part of the political hemisphere of Europe.

I. Philosophical infidels, in our own times, when they have found themselves no longer able to support a perfect scepticism, have borrowed some

Julian's
political
measures.

Christian light, called it natural, and laboured by the help of that to subvert Christianity itself.

We have seen, in part, the same procedure in the Amononian philosophers. In Julian this scheme was reduced to a system; and he issued out precepts for the support of Heathenism, which in his youth he had learned in the Christian school, though he disavows his obligations to his benefactors. The divine excellence of the Gospel, and the extreme malignity of human nature, do each appear hence in a very conspicuous light. To reform Paganism itself was his first object; to maintain it on the old system of popular belief he saw was impossible. Christian light had now rendered pagan darkness visible, its deformity disgusting, and its absurdity contemptible. With great importunity did he exhort magistrates to correct the vices of men, and relieve their miseries, assuring them that the gods would reward men for their charitable acts; that it is our duty to do good to all, even to the worst of men and our bitterest enemies; and that public religion should be supported by a reverential adoration of the images of the gods which were to be looked on as symbols of the gods themselves. Priests, he said, should so live, as to be copies of what they preached by their own lives, and dissolute ones should be expelled from their offices. Not only wicked actions, but obscene and indecent language should be avoided by them. No idle books and wanton plays, but divine philosophy, should be the object of their serious study; they should learn sacred hymns by heart, should pray thrice or at least twice every day; and when in their turn called on to

attend the temple, they should never depart from it, but give up themselves to their office. At other times they should not frequent the forum, nor approach the houses of the great, unless with a view of procuring relief for the indigent, or discharging the duties of their office; that in no case they should frequent the theatres, nor ever be seen in the company of a charioteer, player, or dancer. In every city the most pious and virtuous should be ordained, without any consideration of their circumstances. The godly training of their own families, and their compassionate care for the indigent, would be their best recommendation. The impious Galileans, he observed, by their singular benevolence had strengthened their party, and Heathenism had suffered by the want of attention to these things.

Such was the fire which the apostate stole from heaven, and such his artifice in managing it! The rules, however, deserve the attention of Christian pastors in all ages, though it may seem wonderful that the Roman high priest* should not see the divinity of that religion whence he had learned such excellent things, the like to which are not in any degree to be found in Plato or any other of his favourite Greeks. He endeavoured, in imitation of Christians, also to erect schools for the education of youth. Lectures of religion, stated times of prayers, monasteries for devout persons, hospitals and almshouses for the poor and diseased, and for strangers: these things he particularly recommends in a letter to Arsacius the chief priest of Galacia. He tells him what it was that advanced the impious religion of the Christians, their kindness to strangers, their care in burying the dead, and their affected gravity. He bids him warn the priests to avoid play-houses and taverns, and sordid employments. Hospitals should be erected in every city for the reception of all sorts of indigent persons. The Galileans, he observes, relieve both their own poor, and ours.†

* All the Cæsars were entitled Pontifex Maximus.

† In the same spirit, speaking of the duties of a priest, he observes, "that the gods have given us great hopes after death, and on them we may with confidence rely." He certainly learnt this language from Christianity, which he ungratefully labours to destroy. A species of behaviour not uncommon with philosophic infidels.

view, in eight particulars, of Julian's attempts, that I cannot do better than to tread in his steps. I shall avail myself, however, of other helps, still further to illustrate the subject, particularly Julian's own writings.

It was not, however, in Julian's power to infuse that spirit into his partisans, which alone could produce such excellent fruits. It is vain to think of destroying Christian principles, and at the same time preserving Christian practice. But here is an additional testimony to the virtues of Christians from their most determined enemy, and as powerful an illustration of the work of God in the first ages of Christianity. It must be confessed at the same time, that the good sense and penetration of the emperor are as conspicuous as his malice and impiety.

II. *Ridicule* was the next weapon which the apostate made use of against Christianity. It is a method of attack which in all ages has been but too successful. Satire, as it is the easiest, so it is the most pleasing mode of writing; the whole nature of man, prone to indulge ideas of evil, favours the practice, and when written by an emperor, who might, if he had pleased, have used violence of the most formidable kind, it seemed to be the dictate of generosity. In writing against Christianity, he trode in the steps of Calves and Porphyry, and by the few fragments of his work which remain, appears to have imbibed their spirit. The Son of Mary, or the Galilean, were the titles which he gave to the blessed Jesus, and he ordered Christians to be called *Galileans*.

In his treatise of the *Cæsars*, he asperses his uncle the great Constantine with much severity, and represents the Gospel as an asylum for the vilest of mankind. No doubt the enemies of God were delighted in that age with such productions, as they have since been with similar ones of *Hume* and *Voltaire*: and many are slow to learn, that a serious frame of mind is absolutely necessary for the contemplation of Christianity, and is as favourable for its reception, as a playful spirit is for its exclusion from the mind of man.

III. He was extremely politic in weakening the power and interest of Christians. He made an act of sacrifice the condition of preserving their places of honour and authority, and thus he either lessened their power or their reputation; and while he carefully avoided a formal persecution, he indirectly persecuted under every plausible pretence he could invent. Whoever had distinguished himself, under the former reigns, in demolishing the monuments of idolatry, felt his

heavy hand, and was even put to death on frivolous accusations. The grants made to some subjects from the revenues of heathen temples, furnished a decent opportunity of impoverishing the opulent Christians, and this often with extreme injustice. He seized the treasures of the Arian church at Edessa which had assaulted the *Valentinian heretics*, taunting them with the law of their religion, that being made poor here they might be rich hereafter. Injuries were now committed with impunity against the Christians by the governors of provinces, and when the former complained, he had the business to turn the knowledge of Christian precepts, which he had imbibed in his tender years, into a cruel sarcasm: "You know what directions of passiveness under injuries your Christ has given you!" To this he added an affected encouragement of heretics and sectaries, and thus artfully embroiled the Christian world with factions by toleration of them all, without real affection for any.

IV. It was, however, a refinement of policy far beyond the maxims of that age, and a proof of the native sagacity and good sense of Julian, that, young and impetuous as he was, he could abstain from open persecution himself, and yet connive at it in others, who knew what was agreeable to their master. He boasted of mildness in this respect, and contrasted himself with *Galerius* and the rest of the persecutors, observing, that they had augmented rather than lessened the number of Christians. For give them only occasion, said he, and they will crowd as fast to martyrdom as bees fly to their hives. Yet a number suffered for the Gospel under his reign, though not by the forms of avowed persecution.

V. The bishops and inferior clergy were beheld with an eye of rancour, at once ingenuous and determined. In truth, they are in all ages the object of peculiar malevolence to men who love darkness rather than light. Persecuting emperors and atheistical philosophers unite in this respect. It is the glory of the Christian religion, that it provides popular instruction for the bulk of mankind, where not applause, but spiritual utility,—not ostentation, but holy and virtuous principles and practice,—are the objects of attention. Persecutors desire, that no instruction be instilled into the minds of the people, and philosophers, overlooking the vulgar with proud disdain, confine

their attention to a few learned men. If the Gospel be indeed the light of heaven, that alone leads men to holiness, which fallen nature abhors, one sees at once why the public teachers of Christianity are abhorred by the proud and the mighty. Julian charged them with seditiousness; had he been a citizen of a free state, he would, with equal falsehood and with equal malice, have charged them with supporting tyranny. To deprive the church of the inspection of its pastors, he seized their incomes, abrogated their immunities, exposed them to civil burdens and offices, and occasionally expelled them by fraud or violence. At Antioch the treasures of the church were seized, the clergy obliged to flee, and the churches shut up.* The same was done at Cyzicus without any shadow of sedition. At Bostra he threatened Titus the bishop, that if any mutiny happened, he should lay the blame on him and his clergy; and when the bishop assured him, that though the inhabitants were chiefly Christian, they lived peaceably and quietly under his government, he wrote back to the city, charging him with calumniating their character, and exhorting them to expel him. In other places he found pretences for imprisoning and torturing the pastors.

VI. The vigilant malice of the apostate surveyed every advantage, and seized it with consummate dexterity. Nor can the enemies of the Gospel in any age find a school more fruitful in the lessons of persecution than this before us. A man so perfectly Grecian as this emperor, must have hated or despised the Jews, and Moses must have been as really an object of his derision as St. Paul. But to ad-

* It is certain that the temple of Daphne was burned in the night which terminated the procession of the Christians, who had removed the body of Babylas, a martyr in the Decian persecution, to Antioch from Daphne, where Julian would not suffer it to remain any longer. Julian, in his satire against the people of Antioch, indirectly charged the Christians with the fact, and was glad of the pretence to justify his severities against them. That he suspected them, Ammianus assures us, but gives no grounds to justify the suspicion. The work entitled *Misopogon*, rallies the manners of the Antiochians. Those of the emperor were austere, and void not only of pomp, but even of decent neatness. Theirs were full of Asiatic luxury: In fact, Christian simplicity had much decayed in this place, where Christians first had the name. Their numbers were immense, but the power of godliness was low.

vance and encourage the Jews in their secular concerns, was one of the obvious means of depreciating Christianity. Hence he spake of them with compassion, begged their prayers for his success in the Persian wars, and pressed them to rebuild their temple,* and restore their worship. He himself promised to defray the expense out of the exchequer, and appointed an officer to superintend the work. To strengthen the hands of such determined enemies of Christianity, and to invalidate the Christian prophecies concerning the desolation of the Jews,† were objects highly desirable indeed to the mind of Julian. But the enterprize was suddenly baffled, and the workmen were obliged to desist. No historical fact since the days of the Apostles seems better attested. I shall state very briefly the fact itself and its proofs, and then leave the reader to judge, whether there was ever any reason to doubt its credibility.

Ammianus Marcellinus, a writer of unquestionable credibility, and at least no friend of the Gospel, acquaints us with the attempt, and informs us of its defeat. "He projected to rebuild the magnificent temple of Jerusalem. He committed the conduct of the affair to Alypius of Antioch; who set himself to the vigorous execution of his charge, and was assisted by the governor of the province: but horrible halls of fire breaking out near the foundations with repeated attacks, rendered the place inaccessible to the scorched workmen from time to time, and the element resolutely driving them to a distance, the enterprize was dropped."‡ Socrates observes, that during the progress of this affair the Jews menaced the Christians, and threatened to retort upon them the evils which they had suffered from

* He sent for some of the chief men of their nation, and asked them why they did not sacrifice according to the law of Moses. They told him that they were forbidden to sacrifice except at Jerusalem. He thereupon promises to rebuild their temple; and we have still a letter of his to the community of the Jews, which appears, on the authority of Sozomen, to be genuine. Philostorgius expressly tells us, that Julian's design in the re-building of Jerusalem was to oppose the prophecies. Sozomen.—Lardner.

† See Matt. xxiii. 38, 39. To restore this people, while yet they continued in their enmity to Christ, was an attempt worthy of an infidel like Julian, and called for a miraculous interposition as plainly as Pharaoh's pursuit of the Israelites at the Red Sea.

‡ Ammianus, B. XXIII. c. 1.

the Romans. The Christian evidences for the fact are Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, and Chrysostom, who lived at the same time. The three ecclesiastical historians, Sozomen, and Theodoret, who lived in the next age, do all give a testimony consistent one with another. To these may be added, Philostorgius the Arian, and the testimony of Jewish rabbis. —See Warburton's Julian, p. 98.

VII. The suppression of learning among the Christians was another of the objects of Julian's policy. He published a law, that no professor of any art or science should practise in any place without the approbation of the court of that city, and the sanction of the emperor. With a view to keep the church in ignorance of the arts of reasoning and philosophy, he bade Christian schoolmasters to teach Gentile learning, lest being furnished, says he, with our armour, they make war upon us with our own weapons. Our learning is unnecessary to Christians, who are trained up to an illiterate rusticity, so that to believe is sufficient for them; and by this prohibition I only restore possessions to their proper owners.* The scheme was highly prudent, but it required a great length of time to raise from it any considerable effects.

VIII. Philosophy had ever been the determined foe of the Gospel. It behoved the artful persecutor, himself a philosopher, to encourage it as much as possible. He expressed his hearty wishes, that all the books of the wicked Galileans

were banished out of the world. But as this was now impossible, he directed the philosophers to bend all their powers against them. Jamblicus, Libanius, Maximus, and others of the philosophic tribe, were his intimate friends and counsellors, and the empire was filled with invectives against the Gospel. Its enemies were liberally paid by imperial munificence for their labours, and Julian seemed desirous to put it to the proof, whether indeed the foolishness of God was wiser than men."

IX. He used ensnaring artifices to draw unwary Christians into compliance with pagan superstitions. He was wont to place the images of the heathen gods near his own statues, that those who bowed to the latter might seem to adore also the former. Those who seemed thus to comply, he endeavoured to persuade into greater compliances; those who refused, he charged with treason, and proceeded against them as delinquents. He ordered the soldiers, when they received their donative, to throw a piece of frankincense into the fire in honour of the gods. Some few Christians who had been surprised into the practice, returned to the emperor, threw back their donatives, and professed their readiness to die for their religion.

The story of Theodoret, B. III. c. 17, deserves to be told more particularly. Julian caused an altar to be placed near himself, with burning coals and incense upon a table, and required every one to throw some incense into the fire, before he received his gold. Some, who were aware of the danger, feigned sickness; some through fear or avarice complied. But the greater part were deceived. Some of these last going afterwards to their meals, called on the name of Jesus Christ, according to their custom. One of their companions said in a surprise: "What is the meaning of this! you call on Christ, after having renounced him." "How!" answered the other, astonished. "You have thrown incense into the fire." They instantly tore their hair, rose up from table, and ran into the forum. "We declare it, they cried, before all the world, we are Christians; we declare it before God, to whom we live, and for whom we are ready to die. We have not betrayed thee, Jesus our Saviour. If our hands have offended, our hearts consented not. The emperor has deceived us, we renounce the impiety, and our blood shall answer

* In the same strain, he says "If they (the Christian professors) think these authors give a false account of the most honourable things, let them betake themselves to the churches of the Galileans, and expound Matthew and Luke. Yet those of the [Christian] youth who please to go [to the Pagan schools] are not excluded." So judiciously did he provide for the progress of Hellenism, and for the downfall of Christian knowledge. He charges the Christians with the immaturity of instructing pupils in classical learning, at the same time that they exposed the heathen mythology. The account of La Blotie concerning this matter is just, and his observation deserves to be quoted. "To expulse the classic authors, to commend them as models of language, of eloquence and taste, to quench their beauties, &c., this is not proposing them as enemies of religion and morality." Julian is pleased to confound two things so different, and to erect, under favour of this confusion, the pseudo epistulary, which prevails through his whole edict.

for it." They then ran to the palace, and throwing the gold at Julian's feet, "Sacrifice us, say they, to Jesus Christ, and give your gold to those who will be glad to receive it." In a rage he ordered them to be led to execution. The warmth of his temper had well-nigh prevailed over his politic maxims; he recovered himself, however, in time sufficient to countermand the order. He contented himself with banishing them to the distant parts of the empire, forbidding them to reside in cities. Let the reader see here the philosophizing heathen and the simple Christian in contrast, and judge which religion is human and which is divine.

On some occasions Julian would defile the fountains with Gentile sacrifices, and sprinkle the food brought to market with hallowed water. Christians knew their privilege from St. Paul's well-known determination of the case, yet they groaned under the indignity. Juveninus, and Maximus, two officers of his guard, expostulated with great warmth against these proceedings, and so provoked his resentment, that he punished them capitally, though, with that caution which never forsook him, he declared, that he put them to death not as Christians, but as undutiful subjects.

Jupiter had in no age possessed so zealous a devotee as this prince, who lived at the close of his religious dominion over mankind. The Decius's and the Galerius's, compared with Julian, were mere savages. It is certain, that no ingenuity could have contrived measures more dexterously. Disgrace, poverty, contempt, a moderate degree of severity, checked and disciplined by dissimulation, and every method of undermining the human spirit, were incessantly labouring to subvert Christianity. One sees not how the scheme could have failed, had Providence permitted this prudent and active genius to have proceeded many years in this course: but what a worm is man, when he sets himself to oppose his Maker!

CHAPTER IX.

THE CHURCH UNDER JULIAN.

AFTER having taken a view of various circumstances, all tending to illustrate the state of Christendom, it is time to return to the order of our history from the death of Constantius. The people of

God, with light very faint, were in a low state (torn within by the Arian controversy) and scandalized by the madness of the Donatists. The faithful sons and pastors of the church were by no means simple and intelligent in divine things, and were menaced even with destruction by a persecution conducted with as much malice and vigour as any of the foregoing, and with far greater dexterity. The Christian bishops, however, took advantage of Julian's affected moderation to return to their sees. Meletius came back to Antioch; Lucifer of Cagliari, and Eusebius of Vercellæ, returned to their churches; but Athanasius remained still in the desert, because of the power of George at Alexandria. Julian wrote a letter to Photinus the heretic, and commended his zeal against the divinity of Jesus Christ.* He ordered Eusebius of Cyziens, under severe penalties, to rebuild the church of the Novatians, which he had destroyed in the time of Constantius; a punishment probably just, though like every thing else done by Julian concerning the Christian religion, contrived by him with malignant intentions. He protected the Donatists in Africa, and defended them against the general church and against one another.

The prohibition of human learning decreed by this emperor, induced Apollinarius, the father and the son, to invent something which might stand as a substitute for the loss. The father, a grammarian, wrote in heroics the sacred history, and imitated the Greek tragedians, taking his subjects out of the Scripture. The son, a philosopher, wrote in defence of the Gospel in the form of dialogues, like Plato. Little of these works has come down to us; the prohibition ceasing with the death of Julian, Christian scholars returned to their former studies, and we cannot judge how far the writings of the Apollinarii merited the rank of Classics. Ecebolius, a famous sophist at Constantinople, yielded to the carresses of Julian, and returned to paganism. After the emperor's death he desired to be received again into the church, and prostrating himself at the door of the church, said, "Tread me under foot like salt that hath lost its savour." I know no more of the man to enable me to form a just estimate of his character. We may be convinced, however, that a con-

* Fleury, XV. 4.

considerable number of true Christians were yet in the church, amidst all its corruptions, by this important fact, that the greatest part of public teachers and professors of Christianity chose to quit their chairs, rather than to forsake their religion. Procerastus ought to be distinguished. Julian had studied under him at Athens, and from a kindness to his master, excepted him out of the general law. Yet he refused to be thus singled out from his brethren, and retired. Another of them was Victorinus, an African, converted from idolatry in his old age. The manner of his conversion is finely told by Augustine, and I shall have occasion to give it to the reader hereafter. His rhetorical school was given up on occasion of Julian's edict, and he wrote with zeal in defence of divine truth, though his abilities were inadequate to the work, because he applied himself to the study of Scripture too late in life.

Cassianus, the brother of the famous Gregory Nazianzen, continued to practise physic at court, as he had done in the former reign. His brother wrote to him, how grievous a thing it was to himself and to their aged father (the bishop of Nazianzum in Cappadocia) that he should continue in the court of an infidel, seeking worldly greatness. "Our mother," says he, "could not endure the government. Such the weakness of her sex, and such the fervour of her piety, we are obliged to conceal the truth from her." Cassianus prided by those rebukes; not all the arguments of Julian could move him. "I am a Christian," says he, "and must continue so." Cassianus quitted the court, and retired to his pious father, who was as much delighted with his son's conduct, as earthly-minded parents would have been displeased.

Among the officers of the army was Valentinian, afterwards emperor. He commended the guards who attended Julian. The emperor one day entered into the temple of Fortune, and on each side of the gate stood the door-keepers, who sprinkled with sacred water those who came in. A drop of this water falling on Valentinian's mantle, he struck the officer with his fist, expressed his resentment at his being defiled with the impure water, and tore that part of his mantle.* Julian, incensed at his boldness, banished him from his presence, not for his Christiani-

ty, as he pretended, but because he had not kept his cohort in good order. Sensible, however, of his merit, he still employed him in the army. There were others who like Valentinian defended their Christian profession not with meekness, but wrath. They found, however, the punishment of their folly from Julian, whose partiality and prejudices in favour of Paganism urged him to adopt measures, which filled the whole empire with confusion.

At Merum, a city of Phrygia, Amalchus the governor of the province ordered the temple to be opened, and the idols to be cleansed. Three Christians, inflamed, says my author,* with Christian zeal, could not bear the indignity. Burning, continues he, with an incredible love of virtue, they rushed by night into the temple, and broke all the images. The governor, in his wrath, being about to chastise many innocent persons, the culprits very generously offered themselves to punishment. He gave them the alternative, to sacrifice, or to die. They preferred the latter, and suffered death with exulting tortures; more admirable for fortitude than meekness in their behaviour during their dying scenes.

At Pessinus in Galatia, on the confines of Phrygia, two young men suffered death in the presence of Julian. I wish I could say it was for professing the faith of Christ. But one of them had overturned an idol. The emperor put him to death in a cruel manner, with his companion, their mother and the bishop of the city.

At Ancyra, the capital of Galatia, there was a priest named Basil, who in the

* Socrates, H. III. c. 15. I fear there was in this action more of pride than zeal. Christians having tasted a little of the pleasures of superiority over the Pagans in the two last empires, and being influenced in no high degree by Christian principles in those times, descended again into a state of disgrace and inferiority with much reluctance. In the same spirit, at Durostora in Thrace, one Amilian was cast into the fire by the soldiers for having overthrown certain altars. Those only who are in the vigorous exercise of spiritual arms, can with cheerful patience abstain from such as are carnal, when they are under provocation. Yet true Christians might be in a degree overcome by this spirit, and suffer with the love of Christ prevailing in the heart. The intelligent reader will take notice, however, from the commendations bestowed on such conduct by Socrates, how much the spirit of Christianity had declined since the days of Cyprian.

former reign had opposed Arianism, and now with equal sincerity resisted idolatry. He went through the city, publicly exhorting the people to avoid polluting themselves with sacrifices. Once observing the Gentiles employed in their religious rites, he sighed, and besought God, that no Christian* might be guilty of such enormity. The governor upon this apprehended him, charging him with sedition, and having tortured him, kept him in prison. Julian himself coming to Ancyra, sent for Basil, who reproached him with his apostasy. Julian said, he had intended to dismiss him, but was obliged to treat him severely on account of his impudence. And in the end this priest suffered death in torture. Busiris was a heretic of the sect of the Abstemious, and was tortured at the same place. His constancy was amazing to the beholders; but he outlived Julian, recovered his liberty, and afterwards quitting his heresy, returned to the general church.

Cæsarea, in Cappadocia, being almost entirely Christian, having destroyed the temple of Fortune since Julian's accession, merited his peculiar hatred; and he oppressed it with heavy exactions. Julian arriving at Antioch, was mortified to find how low the Pagan interest was fallen there.† The feast of Apollo was annually celebrated at Daphne, and on that occasion he expected to see the religious magnificence of Antioch displayed before himself as high priest. "What sacrifice," said he to the priest, "is to be offered at the festival?" "I have brought a goose from home," replied he, "but the city has prepared nothing." "You, all of you," addressing himself to the senate,‡ "suffer every thing to be carried out of your

houses, and given to the Galileans by your wives, who support the poor with your wealth, and give credit to their impiety." He uttered more to the same purpose, but he could not communicate his zeal to the senate or people of Antioch. The rage for Hellenism had ceased for ever.

Mark, the bishop of Arethusa, in Syria, being ordered to pay the expense of rebuilding an idolatrous temple, which he had destroyed in the time of Constantius, and refusing, from conscientious motives, was tortured in an uncommon manner, and bore his sufferings with such astonishing patience, that the prefect said to Julian, "Is it not a shame, sir, that the Christians should be so much superior to us, and that an old man, over whom victory itself would be inglorious, should conquer us?" He was at length dismissed; and a number, who had persecuted him, attended afterwards to his instructions. The bishop had saved the life of Julian in the beginning of the reign of Constantius, when all his family was in danger! His character appears to have been that of eminent piety and virtue; as such he is extolled by Gregory Nazianzen, though he had all along supported the Arian party: and considering the entire separation of the Arian from the general church, it is very improbable that Gregory should speak of him so highly as he does, had he not returned to the church, and been in its communion at that time.* It would be tedious to recite all the accounts of those who suffered from the insolent cruelty of Pagans, under the politic connivance and partiality of Julian during his short reign.

In the year 362, George† of Alexandria was murdered by the Pagans of that city, to whom he had made himself obnoxious, by exposing their senseless and ridiculous rites. The providence of God was wonderfully displayed in causing this man, who had distinguished himself as the persecutor of his people, to perish by the hands of idolators at last. There were not wanting, however, those who gave it out, that he had been murdered by the

Murder of
George of
Alexan-
dria,
A. D. 362.

* Sozomen, B. V. c. 11.

† The indefatigable pains which the Apostate took in support of Paganism is almost incredible. On the festivals to Venus he walked in procession with lewd women of the worst character. So says Chrysostom. Yet Lardner, who always mitigates the bad against Julian, fancies that Julian scorned all debauch. Moreover, he effects to doubt of the truth of the representations of the follies and immoralities of this emperor; because they are the accounts of Christians; and because Gregory Nazianzen is apt to overstate matters. Be it so—but still it will not follow that the whole is false; and the judicious reader will rather be disposed to conclude that Lardner himself is greatly prejudiced in favour of Julian.—See Amm. Marcellinus.

‡ Misopogon.

* Theodoret, B. III. c. 7. Fleury, B. XV. c. 17.

† This is he whom monkish ignorance hath exalted into St. George, the Champion of England, against all the rules of history, geography and common sense.

Athanasian party.* The letter of Julian to the people of Alexandria, still extant, abundantly confutes this calumny. He blames none but those of his own religion for it, and in his manner of blaming them, he confesses that George deserved even *severe* punishments, and declares that he will inflict no higher penalty on them than a reprimand, which he hopes they will reverence, "because from their first origin they were Greeks." Such the partiality of Julian for Gentiles!

The reader will not have forgotten, that Athanasius was all this time in confinement. He had spent seven years, partly in the deserts, and partly in the house of a virgin at Alexandria. And the steady affection which the people had for him, and which no persecution of enemies could conquer, had under God preserved him from his enemies. This year, after

Athanasius returned to his bishopric.

the death of George, he ventured to return openly to his bishopric. The Arians were obliged to hold their meetings in private houses, and the general voice of the people every where sincerely decided for Athanasius. During the little time that he was allowed to appear in public, he acted as a Christian bishop, treating his enemies with mildness, and relieving the distressed without respect of persons, restoring the custom of preaching on the doctrine of the Trinity, removing from the sanctuary those who had made a traffic of holy things, and gaining the hearts of the people. He held a council at Alexandria, composed of those who had particularly suffered during the Arian persecution, among whom Eusebius of Verulam was particularly distinguished. Here those, who, contrary to their settled principles, had been beguiled by Arian subtleties to subscribe what they did not believe, with tears owned how they had been imposed on, and were received into the Church. Here the doctrine of the Trinity was again cleared of the ambiguities which had clouded it, and the Nicene creed was allowed to be the most accurate and exact. Two schisms† subsequently rent the church at this time. The first was at Antioch, where Eusebius the Arian had the chief sway. The followers of Eusebius, the late orthodox bishop, gave themselves up to Paulinus, a presbyter; while an-

other party looked on themselves as belonging to Meletius, who had lately returned from exile. Lucifer of Cagliari, in his return through the East from banishment in Egypt, stopped at Antioch, with the best intentions, and endeavoured to heal the divisions of the church. But by ordaining Paulinus, he confirmed the evils which he meant to cure. Meletius had a church without the city, Paulinus was allowed one within the city; while Eusebius, the most popular, possessed himself of the rest of the churches, but justice requires us to say, that he used his victory with moderation; and respecting the age, meekness, and piety of Paulinus, he did not deprive him of his little church in the city. A rare instance of moderation in an Arian leader! Lucifer himself was offended, that his fellow-sufferer Eusebius would not approve of his conduct at Antioch, and even broke off communion with him. Finding his obstinacy much blamed in the church, he became a schismatic altogether, returned to his own church at Cagliari in Sardinia, where he died eight years after. His followers were called Luciferians, but they were few in number.*

* No man ever exceeded Lucifer in courage and hardness of spirit. When in exile for the Nicene faith, he published certain writings, in which he accuses Constantius with the most astonishing boldness. If there were more of the meekness of the Gospel in these writings, it might be proper to quote some parts of them for the edification of the Christian reader; but there is evidently too much of the man, and too little of the saint, in the whole method and spirit of them. Not content with composing these works, he sent a copy of them to the emperor, who, surprised at his boldness, ordered him to be asked, "whether he had really sent them." "Know," answered the intrepid bishop, "that I did send the book to the emperor, and after having again considered it, I do not retract, and when you have examined the reasons for which I have written in this manner, you will find that we have been strengthened by God, so as to expect with gladness the death which is preparing for us." I wonder not that Athanasius highly commends this man; he himself, though in a less degree, partook of the same spirit. It is useful to mark the declarations of the Christian spirit among good men. The want of a closer attention to the vitals of experimental godliness rendered even the best men in these days too ferocious in their opposition to heretics. Lucifer was consistent throughout; the same temper which appears to have actuated him in his conduct towards Constantius, seduced him into a blameable schism in his latter days; yet

* Socrates, B. III. c. 3.

† Socrates, B. III. c. 9. Fleury, B. XV. 29.

It is the design of history to record what may be useful to mankind. In this view, even the faults of the wise and good are serviceable. The unhappy spirit of faction, in the decline of Christian faith and love, split the small remnant of the faithful in Antioch into two parties, which subsisted some time after the beginning of the next century. Two persons, both of undoubted piety, minister there, and yet cannot heal the evil. A third, who had distinguished himself for zeal and piety above many of his age, endeavours to compose the breach, but widens it. He himself soon after, through the impatience of contradiction, makes another party. There was a world of wisdom in St. John's charge to the Church in his old age. "Little children, love one another." The want of it is sure to be succeeded by factions, surmises, and endless divisions. The breach once made is more easily widened than closed. While the Gospel flourished in name through Antioch, the vices of luxury prevailed amidst the evils of heresy and schism. The church there became the mark of reproach to the Apostate, in his satire against their city. I turn with more pleasure to behold Eusebius of Vercellæ, who came back to his western bishopric in Italy, where he was received with extraordinary joy. His labours, and those of Hilary of Poitiers, were serviceable in Italy, Gaul, and in general through Europe. There the Arian heresy was suppressed, and peace and unity reigned. False learning and philosophy had not so corrupted the understanding. The Donatists in Africa obtained leave of Julian to recover their churches, and that frantic and turbulent sect proceeded to exercise military violence—an evil with which they had always been infected.

Athanasius was not allowed to enjoy long the sweets of liberty. The gentile Alexandrians represented to the emperor, that he corrupted the city and all Egypt, and that if he continued there, not a Pagan would be left. Julian's affected moderation was tried to the utmost in this case; and the open spirit of persecution, which, contrary to his deliberate maxims, he displayed on this occasion, does immortal honour to the talents and integrity of the Egyptian prelate. "I allowed

those Galileans," says he, "who had been banished, to return to their countries, not to their churches.* I order Athanasius to leave the city on the receipt of my letter." The Christians wrote to the emperor, and begged that he might not be taken from them. Provoked to see how deeply the love of Christianity was fixed in them, and what progress the bishop had made in a very little time, Julian answered them,† that since Alexander was their founder, and Serapis and Isis their tutelary gods, it was surprising that the corrupted part should dare to call themselves the community. "I am ashamed," says he, "that the gods should suffer any of you Alexandrians to confess himself a Galilean. You forget your ancient felicity, when Egypt conversed with the gods, and you abounded with prosperity. Your Alexander was a servant of the gods, whom Jupiter raised far above any of these, or the Hebrews, who were much better. The Ptolemies, who cherished your city as a daughter, advanced it to its greatness not by preaching Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the execrable Galileans. If you resolve to follow these impostors, agree among yourselves, and desire not to retain Athanasius. Many of his disciples are capable of pleasing you by their impious discourses. But if your affection for him is grounded on his skill and shrewdness (for I hear the man is crafty,) for this reason I expel him from your city. That such an intriguer should preside over the people, is dangerous; one who deserves not the name of man, a low despicable creature,‡ who takes a pride in hazarding his life, and is fit only to cause disturbances in society." To hasten the execution of his order, Julian wrote to the governor of Egypt,§ that if he did not expel Athanasius by a certain time, a time which he limited, he would fine his officers one hundred pounds of gold. "I am deeply afflicted," says he, "at the contempt of the gods, which is shown by this man; it will be highly agreeable to me if you drive the villain out of Egypt, who under my government

who can deny the sincerity of his love for the truth, and the integrity of his heart?—See page 291 of this volume.

* Jul. Epist. 26. A distinction certainly unfounded, because contrary to the permission granted to all the rest of the bishops.

† Epist. 51.

‡ The original is *καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου*, and not a man, the malignant spirit of which it is not easy to translate into English.

§ Epist. 6.

has had the insolence to baptize Grecian women of quality."

The enmity of the carnal mind against God has seldom been more displayed than in those letters concerning Athanasius. It breaks through all disguises, and transgresses all the bounds of prudence and decorum. The affectation also of despising a man whom he feared, and whose abilities dismayed him, is completely evident. One sees in the weakness of his arguments, how incapable even sensible men are of saying anything that has the least tendency to shake the mind of a Christian. We must take every opportunity to show the progress of the Gospel; and as, through the scantiness of materials, a part of our evidence must come from the mouth of enemies, it should be observed, that there is in the last letter a confession of the laborious and useful life of Athanasius. He staid not a year in his bishopric since his return; yet in that time he confirmed the faithful in the truth; he demonstrated the power of goodness by kindness, liberality and mercy, to enemies as well as friends; he extended the pale of the church by the conversion of Pagans, some of noble birth; and he merited the indignation, and alarmed the fears of the monarch of the Roman world. Such is the Grace of God operating by Christian principles!

Athanasius was therefore obliged once more to seek safety by flight. All the faithful gathered round him weeping.

Athanasius once more has recourse to flight.

"We must retire a little time, friends," says he; "it is a cloud that will soon fly over." He took leave of them, recommending his church to the abode of his friends, and going on board a vessel, he fled by the Nile into the obscurer parts of Egypt. Still his life was in imminent danger. The persecutions followed, and were not far from him, which induced Athanasius to use something of that craftiness with which Jehu charged him.* He directed his companions to return to Alexandria, and to meet his enemies. The pursuers asked them curiously, "Have you seen Athanasius?"—"He is near," say they; "make haste, and you will soon overtake him." Thus deluded, they went forward with speed in vain; and the

bishop, who had secreted himself during this scene, returned in private to Alexandria, where he lay concealed till the end of the persecution. Thus did the malice of Julian expose this great and good man, to use the same sort of artifices, which David did, when persecuted by king Saul, who made the same remark as Julian did, "It is told me that he dealeth very subtilly;"† a conduct which probably extorted from him afterwards that prayer, "Remove from me the way of lying."

The active spirit of Julian was now bent on the destruction of the Persian monarchy; and the pains and expense which he made use of in sacrifices and auguries, may seem incredible. But his ardent mind was one of the fittest instruments of Satanic infatuation, and Divine Providence was hastening his end. At Antioch he was so provoked by the Psalmody of the Christians, particularly the chorus which they used, "Confounded be all they that worship graven images," that he ordered his Pretorian prefect, Sallust, to punish them. He, though a Gentile, reluctantly obeyed, and seized a number of Christians. One of them, Theodorus, a young man, was so long and so variously tortured, that his life was despaired of. But God preserved him. Rufinus, the Latin ecclesiastical historian,‡ declares, that he saw him a long time after, and asked him, whether he felt any pain in his torments. He owned not much; for a young man stood by him, wiped off his sweat, and encouraged his spirit: so that upon the whole he felt during his tortures more pleasure than pain. A memorable instance of the gracious care of God over his servants! Julian seems to have increased in cruelty, as he came nearer his end: He persecuted numbers at Antioch. Gregory Nazianzen, in an oration, describes these facts rather in a rhetorical than in an accurate manner, and speaks also of his horrible incantations, and the cruelties attendant on his superstition. The description is probably exaggerated; but Gregory was both too intelligent and too honest either to have been deceived himself, or to have deceived others altogether. Certain it is, that Julian toward the Christian part of his subjects was a tyrant; and one instance more shall close the account of his severities. Publica, a

* Sozomen, B. V. c. 15. Socrates, B. III. c. 14.

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† Samuel xiii. 22.

‡ Socrates, B. III. c. 19. Ruf. B. I. c. 26.

widow of great reputation, with a number of virgins over whom she presided at Antioch, sung and praised God, when Julian was passing by. In particular, they sung such parts of the Psalms as expose the wickedness and folly of idolatry. Julian ordered them to hold their peace, till he had passed them. Publia, with more zeal than charity, I fear, encouraged them, and caused them to sing on another occasion as he passed, "Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered."* Julian in a rage ordered her to be brought before him, and to be buffeted on each side of her face. The effects of passion seem but too visible both in the emperor and the woman: there is, however, this difference; the one had a zeal for God, the other a contempt.

I studiously avoid secular history as much as possible; and having no business with Julian's war against the Persians,† I have only to take notice of the circumstances of his death, and to make a reflection or two on the conduct of Divine Providence, on the character of the man, and on the lessons of piety which are obviously imprinted on his story, and on the great deliverance vouchsafed to the Church. He received a mortal wound from a Persian lance in a skirmish. We are told, that, conscious of his approaching end, he filled his hand with the blood, and casting it into the air, said, "O GALILEAN, THOU HAST CONQUERED."‡ Some think that by that action, he meant to reproach the sun, the idol of the Persians; for his partiality to them, though he himself had been his devout worshipper. It is highly probable, that a soul so active and vehement as his, did express his indignation in some remarkable way at that juncture: neither of the accounts are improbable, though both cannot be true.

* Theodoret, B. III. c. 19.

† I shall introduce here a circumstance which happened at Bera, whither Julian went in his march from Antioch. There he found the son of an illustrious citizen, who had been disinherited by his father for following the religion of the emperor. Inviting them to dinner, and placing himself between them, he in vain endeavoured to unite them. Finding the father inexorable, he promised the son to be a father in his place.—His religious addresses to the people of this place were little regarded by the senate of Bera, which was almost entirely Christian. So deeply had this place received Christianity, and so perseveringly preserved it since the days of the Apostles.—Acts xvii.

‡ Theodoret, B. III. c. 25.

In his last moments in his tent he expressed a readiness to die, declaring that he had learned from philosophy, how much more excellent the soul was than the body, and that death ought rather to be the subject of joy than of affliction. He boasted, that he had lived without guilt, and that he reflected with pleasure on the innocence of his private, and the integrity of his public life. He reproved the immoderate grief of the spectators, and begged them not to disgrace by their tears his death, as in a few moments he should mix with heaven and the stars. He entered into a metaphysical argument with Maximus and Priscus, his favourite philosophers, on the nature of the soul. He died after a reign of one year and eight months, in the thirty-second year of his age. A man of good understanding who taught children at Antioch, was in company with Libanius, who asked him what the carpenter's son was doing. It was smartly replied, "the Maker of the world, whom you jocosely call the carpenter's son, is employed in making a coffin." A few days after, tidings came to Antioch of Julian's death.* The story is related also by authors somewhat differently, but its substance seems to be true: nor is there any occasion to suppose the schoolmaster to have been possessed of the spirit of prophecy. The minds of Christians in general must have been extremely agitated during this whole scene of Julian's attempt against the Persian empire: their ardent prayers for the preservation of the church, without the least personal ill will to their imperial persecutor, almost implied an expectation of his death in the answer to their prayers; and the extraordinary rashness, with which his military expedition was conducted, might lead mankind in general to hope, or to fear, it would end in his ruin.

The conduct of Divine Providence is ever to be adored, in hastening the death of so formidable an enemy to his people; whose schemes seemed only to require length of time to effect the ruin of the Church. But he was suffered to aim at too many objects at once, the restoration of idolatry, the ruin of Christianity, the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and the conquest of Persia. That he should have pursued this last with such avidity, is an instance

Death of
Julian,
A. D. 363.

* Theodoret.

of the opposition of two parties to each other, both equally bent on the ruin of the Church: a thing very common in history, by which the Lord frequently saves his people. How much more prudent had it been in Julian to have made an alliance with the Persian monarch, who would gladly have accepted it, and to have united with him in the destruction of Christians, against whom they both were equally incensed. Thus does God inflame the councils of his enemies, and lead them to quarrel with one another for the good of his Church, rather than to unite for its ruin!

It philosophic pride had not entirely hardened the heart and stupified the conscience of the apostate, he could never have boasted in his last moments of his innocence and integrity. Besides numberless evils which a mind not quite steeled against the checks of conscience must have perceived, the guilt of ten years hypocrisy surely should have moved him to remorse. If sincerity be not essential to virtue upon every possible system, it is hard to say what is. But from the time of his initiation into the Platonic mysteries at Ephesus, to his open avowal of paganism, he dissembled in religion altogether; he openly professed the Gospel, and secretly worshipped idols. His friend Libanius commends his hypocrisy. Philosophers in general, who held that **every thing was God, and yet constantly practised all the rites of vulgar polytheism, dissembled continually.** The mind of Julian seems with astonishing inconsistency to have united, in sincere belief, the tenets of philosophy with the vulgar idolatry; but his hypocrisy with respect to Christianity, so artfully persisted in till the death of Constantine, is one of the completest instances of deceit I read of in history. That man must either be extinct at death, or be happy by a reunion with the Deity, was the belief of the philosophers in general: and Julian, like them, avows it at his death, and, like Cæsar,* he had not the least idea of punishment for sin in an after-life. What is meant then by the praises so profusely conferred in our age on philosophic infidels? Are hypocrisy, atheism, the extinction of the feelings of natural conscience, and a total exemption from all that modest sense of imbecility which is so becoming a frail creature like man,

are these virtues? Shall we be told in triumph, how nobly Hume the philosopher died? Is the very worst state of mind to be gloried in as the best? Is not scepticism and indifference about a future state, a mark of what the Scripture calls a reprobate mind, however it may be complimented by unbelievers with the appellation of a philosophical spirit? How much more amiable a prince would Julian have been, if he had lived like Antonius Pius, following the rules of plain and common sense; and how large a part of the defects and vices of his character was owing to this same philosophy!

Yet a tear of compassion is due to this extraordinary man. He had seen a poor sample of the Gospel in the lives and manners of the family of Constantine, and had suffered deep and cruel injuries from them. Philosophers cautiously watched him when very young, and infused their poison with dexterity. Useful lessons may be learned from history by young persons, who among ourselves having been educated by Christians of mere formal orthodoxy, are ever prone to be seduced by heretical philosophers. While those, who profess the Gospel, are loudly called on to take care, that they express their religious zeal by something more substantial than words and forms. Young minds who are under the influence of unfruitful professors, are seriously warned, by the apostasy of Julian, to perform with diligence what he neglected, namely, To search the Scriptures for themselves with prayer. Had Julian been as studious of the Greek Testament as he was of Plato, and prayed as earnestly to God through Christ as he did or seemed to do to Jupiter and Apollo, he might have escaped the snare of Satan. But men confirm themselves in apostasy and infidelity, by hearkening to every thing that tends to produce these evils, and they avoid the force of divine truth by contemptuous neglect and indifference.

I wish the spirit of the Church could be more an object of our commendation during this whole scene than it is. No doubt many prayed sincerely, and we have seen abundant proofs of godly men choosing to suffer rather than to sin. But it is evident, that there was a great want of primitive meekness and patience. Persecution under Julian was incurred too frequently by Christians without cause. Even just sentiments on this subject

* See his *Senectute*, toward the end.

were lost by many. Sozomen, speaking of a suspicion, that Julian was slain by a Christian, admits that if it were so, none could easily blame the action: and supposes that Christians might do innocently at least what heathen patriots have done so laudably.* Such sentiments, compared with the primitive spirit of the Gospel, mark the degeneracy of the times, at the same time that they afford most lamentable advantages to the unbeliever.

CHAPTER X.

THE CHURCH UNDER JOVIAN.

This prince succeeded Julian in the year 363, aged about 33 years. His reign was terminated by sudden death, after little more than seven months: nor was there any thing peculiarly shining or eminent in his talents or character. Civil history does not distinguish him. In ecclesiastical history he merits a particular attention; for he is the first of the Roman emperors who gave some clear evidences, though not unequivocal, of real love to the truth as it is in Jesus. It were to be wished that the accounts of this emperor had been more explicit and large. Neither his faith, however, nor his practice seem to contradict what I have asserted; and Providence just showed him to the Roman world, that he might restore the sinking Church, and then removed him.

* Sozom. B. VI. c. 11.

† The first Constantine seems in doctrine to have followed the Semi-Arianism of Eusebius, or perhaps more properly may be said to have not understood the Gospel in any light; and the latter part of his life, it is allowed on all hands, was very faulty. Of Constantius, nothing need be said. Of Philip, in the last century, we know much more evil, notwithstanding his Christian profession. I could wish the reader, with me, to estimate the worth of characters by their spirituality and holiness, not by talents and exploits. If he does not, he will wonder that I should make light of the great Constantine in comparison of the obscure Jovian.

‡ I say seem to contradict; for I am aware that Ammianus charges him with gluttonous and libidinous excesses. But this author was not a Christian, and he expresses his hopes, that he might have corrected them, and owns that he was very sincere in his religion. This seems as much in Jovian's favour as may be expected from Ammianus.

In Julian's time he had given a noble mark of Christian sincerity, by declaring that he would rather quit the service than his religion.* Yet Julian kept him near his person, and employed him in his fatal expedition; an unequivocal proof, that his talents and capacity, though not of the first rate, were by no means defective. In stature he was much above the common size, and large in proportion, so that it was difficult to find an imperial habit that would suit him. The most striking feature in his character seems to have been a consistent frankness, openness, and integrity, such as I look for in vain among mere philosophers and mere heroes. Nor can it easily exist, except in minds erected by divine grace above the crooked pursuits of secular ambition. Though the empire of the Roman world was in his eye, he forgot not that he was a Christian, and was solicitous to confess his Saviour at a time when the cause of Paganism must have predominated much in Julian's army. "I am a Christian," says he, "I cannot command idolaters, and I see the wrath of the living God ready to fall on an army of his enemies." "You command Christians! exclaimed those who heard him; the reign of superstition has been too short to efface from our minds the instructions of the great Constantine and of his son Constantius." Jovian heard with pleasure, and assented; and the Pagans in the army seem to have been silent.†

The army was in a situation of extreme danger at the time of Julian's death; far advanced into an enemy's country, and without provisions. The rashness of his predecessor had involved Jovian in these

* I follow the Abbe de la Bletterie in his Life of this prince, which is beautifully written; yet I keep my eye on the ancient historians all along.

† Theod. IV. 2. Socrat. III. 22. Both these historians tell the same story, though the former somewhat more fully. Ammianus observes, indeed, that the victims and entrails were inspected for Jovian: on which account Mr. Gibbon exults over the destruction of Theodoret's legend. But who does not see, that the superstitious practice having been in high vogue under Julian, it might be continued, for the present at least, even without Jovian's knowledge? How does it appear that Theodoret's narrative deserved to be called a legend, any more than Ammianus's, or even Gibbon's? Besides, this object takes no notice at all of the authority of Socrates, who in candour and veracity is generally allowed to have been eminent.

difficulties, and compelled him to negotiate with Sapor the Persian king; whose craft imposed on the undesigning simplicity of the new emperor. By affected delays, the old Persian monarch protracted the negotiation, till the increasing distress of the Romans for want of provisions enabled Sapor to dictate the terms entirely. Ammianus thinks it would have been a thousand times better to have tried the chance of war, than to have accepted any of the conditions. But Jovian was a Christian; he could not gain advantages by fraud and deceit in the course of the negotiation; the preservation of the lives of men was to him of more importance than of the distant provinces which he was obliged to cede to Sapor: and it is remarkably providential, that the first instance we have on record of an ignominious and disadvantageous treaty concluded by the Romans, was under a monarch, who it is hoped belonged sincerely to Him whose kingdom is not of this world. Heavy are the complaints which Roman writers make of this dishonourable peace: Gregory Nazianzen laments it, but throws the blame on Julian: the pagan historian Eusebius seems to justify Jovian by calling it a treaty ignoble indeed, but necessary.

I seem to behold new maxims of government appearing under the first faithful emperor. The rule of the Psalmist,* in controversy, was perhaps never more punctually followed than by Jovian.—Though the inhabitants of Nisibis in Mesopotamia petitioned him, with the most vehement importunity, to suffer them to defend their fortress against the Persian king, from their extreme unwillingness to leave their native country, he answered, That he had expressly sworn to deliver up the city, and that he could not elude an oath by vain subtleties. Crowns of gold were usually offered by cities to new princes. The people of Nisibis, willing to remain under the Roman government, very sedulously performed this act of homage. Jovian refused the crown; but they at length in a manner compelled him to accept it. Nothing, however, could move him from his purpose. He obliged the inhabitants to depart with their effects, somewhat earlier than he would have done, had he not been exasperated by their insults and importunities.

Yet he seems to have done all that circumstances allowed. He ordered Amida, whither most of them retired, and which had been almost ruined by Sapor, to be rebuilt for their use, and settled them there. Not only Pagan, but some Christian authors, reproach Jovian for executing the treaty with so much fidelity. I confess he appears to me highly amiable in these very things, for which he has been so much censured. It was an act worthy of a prince who served Jesus Christ, to dread more the loss of truth and the wrath of God, on account of perjury, than the loss of territory. It is difficult for men to divest themselves of the regard for worldly honour and greatness. This illusion gives Jovian a mean appearance in the eyes of most writers.† Could such a man be fit to govern an empire? Let it be remembered, however, that if Christian principles place a man under disadvantages in some worldly respects, they compensate for these in others. The same fear of God, which hindered Jovian from breaking his word, would have kept him from entering into a war of such madness and folly, as he found himself involved in at his accession.

These secular transactions would not have engaged my attention, were they not connected with an illustration of the religious principles and conduct of the prince. When I can meet with an exalted personage, who evidences a Christian spirit, I shall think his actions belong properly to this history. But to proceed: at Carrhae in Mesopotamia, a city wholly pagan, the messenger, who brought the first news of Julian's death, was near being stoned. Never was paganism more completely disappointed. Her hopes in an instant vanished as a dream, and the Church triumphed in praising her God, who is ever faithful to his promises. Real saints who doubtless show their thankfulness in a becoming manner, and Gregory Nazianzen was particularly careful, in an oration which he published on the occasion, to exhort Christians to display their meekness, humility, and charity. But compassion for a perishing enemy, and fear at the prospect of prosperity were not exhibited as they ought to have been. Antioch, in

* It is astonishing how the Abbe de la Motte could be induced to think, that Jovian was not bound to execute his promise, and should write a dissertation in support of his opinion.

* Psalm xv. 4. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

particular, personally hostile to Julian, and filled with Arianism, demonstrated how much it had fallen from Christian purity. Public entertainments, sacred and profane festivals, filled this voluptuous city. Dances and public shows were seen in the churches; and the theatres resounded with insulting acclamations. There the victory of the cross was published, there Maximus was addressed, as if present: "Fond Maximus! what has become of thy predictions? God and his Christ have conquered."

Jovian led his army to Antioch, in which he remained six weeks, and applied himself to the regulation of religion. The conduct of his predecessor had involved him in intricate difficulties, both in ecclesiastical affairs and in civil. The whole empire was torn with distractions, and Julian's affected toleration had been attended with the horrors of real persecution. Already on his death the temples were every where shut;* the priests absconded; the philosophers had quitted the cloak, and resumed their common dress: to so great a despair were the Pagans reduced. Within the church, the Orthodox and the Arians were every where at variance; Antioch itself was split into three divisions. The Donatists in Africa exercised a turbulence that required the interference of the magistrate. The Novatians, faulty only in a narrow bigotry and excess of discipline, had kept up some good understanding with the general Church, had joined her in the defence of the faith against Arianism, had endured persecution in common with her, while Arianism triumphed; and some of them at Martinium in Paphlagonia had cut in pieces several companies of soldiers who under Constantius had been sent to oblige them to embrace Arianism. But during the reign of Julian, if we except the mad excesses of the Donatists, a kind of truce had prevailed among the contending parties. Immediately on his death their eyes were solicitously directed to his successor, to see what measures he would pursue. Himself a sincere believer of the primitive faith, he yet abhorred persecution. Convinced that conscience could not be forced, and that a voluntary religion only was acceptable to God, he made a law, by which he permitted the Pagans to re-open their temples, and exercise their religion. Yet he pe-

temporarily forbade witchcraft and impostures. He suffered the public sacrifices, but put a stop to the overflowings of magic and enchantments, with which Julian had filled the empire; in fine, he granted the Pagans more than Constantius had allowed, and placed them in the same state in which they had been left by the great Constantine. In this toleration there was an effective sincerity, to which that of Julian had no just pretensions. In the former reign, the Christian found himself only nominally free; in the latter, the Pagan found himself really so. Philosophers themselves were admitted to court; though it could not be expected, that they should become the bosom friends of a Christian emperor. Some of the courtiers insulted them; Jovian himself was too just and generous to do it. Even Libanius and Maximus, the pillars of Paganism and philosophy, were spared; we may thence judge how mildly others were treated. At Constantinople also, sacrifices were publicly offered for the solemnity of the consulship of Jovian. He even permitted Themistius, an illustrious pagan magistrate, to harangue before him on the propriety of religious freedom, and the rights of conscience, and to thank him for the liberty which he gave to his subjects. His speech on the occasion need not be given; the sentiments are now common and trite; something right and something wrong, as is usual at this day, appears on the face of it. The right of private judgment and the iniquity of compulsion are justly stated; and, like all men who are void of any true religious principle, he intimates that all religions are equally true and equally pleasing to God. But it seems a pitiable thing, that none of the learned and philosophical Pagans should have found out this doctrine before! if they had, how much Christian blood would have been spared! It would have redounded more to their credit, if they had made or propagated this discovery during the Christian persecutions. To speak of it now, when they were the inferior party, looks more like selfishness than liberality. Philosophers wrote against Christians with much animosity, and some of them joined actively in persecuting: I recollect not one, before Themistius, who pleaded for toleration.

At the same time Jovian declared Christianity to be the established religion, and replaced in the standard the figure of

* Socrates.

the cross, which Julian had taken away. He ordered the Christians to be restored to their churches, recalled their exiles, and reinstated them in all their privileges. One Magnus, an officer of note, had been by his private authority the church of Berytus in Phœnicia. He was himself an unprincipled man, ardent in persecution. Jovian was very near beheading him; but contented himself with obliging him to rebuild the church at his own expense.

Thus did Jovian prove himself the defender of Christianity as the established religion, and of toleration at the same time. The ingenuity of man can proceed no farther in such a subject. The principles of church government, which have for a hundred years subsisted among ourselves, were in their great outlines introduced by Jovian into the empire: and on the whole convey a just idea of the integrity of his heart and the soundness of his understanding.*

Athanasius had no sooner heard of the death of Julian, than he suddenly appeared again at Alexandria, to the agreeable surprise of his people. A letter from Jovian confirmed him in his office, and it was conceived in these terms:—"To the most religious friend of God, Athanasius. As we admire beyond expression the sanctity of your life, in which shine forth the marks of resemblance to the God of the universe,†

ATHANASIUS
appears
again at
Alexan-
dria.

† This praise seems due to Jovian in general for his conduct; at the same time I am far from pretending to determine precisely the line which he ought to have pursued. Numbers speak with great confidence on the subject of religious establishments and toleration, who have never weighed the differences with which it is involved. A more proper place to investigate it may occur, when we come to the reign of Theodosius.

§ Mr. Gibbon calls this impious and extravagant flattery. Who but a person rather exceedingly prejudiced or constant would have regarded such an assertion? I scruple not to charge the learned critic with both. His prejudice will not allow him to bear a short interval of the prosperity of Athanasius with patience, and his ignorance of the Scriptures has led him here to express his prejudice with peculiar plenitude. Every child in divinity knows, that to say, a man resembles God, or bears his image and likeness, means no more, than—that he is raised in knowledge after the image of Him that created him; that he is what Adam was before the fall, what every Christian is made by grace. What an immensity of blessing do such men attain, without knowing the very elements of the New Testament?

and your zeal for Jesus Christ our Saviour, we take you, venerable bishop, under our protection. You deserve it, by the courage which you have shown in the most painful labours, and your contempt of persecutors and menacing words.—Holding in your hand the helm of faith, which is so dear to you, you cease not to combat for the truth, nor to edify the Christian people, who find in you the perfect model of all virtues. For these reasons we recall you immediately, and we order you to return, to teach the doctrine of salvation. Return to the holy churches; feed the people of God. Let the pastor at the head of the flock offer up prayers for our person; for we are persuaded, that God will diffuse on us and on our fellow Christians his signal favours, if you afford the assistance of your prayers."

Jovian wrote to him again, to ask instruction with respect to the Arian controversy. Athanasius, entering into his views, convened some bishops, and answered him in the name of the synod, recommending to him the Nicene faith, and defending it in his usual manner. Jovian directed him to come to Antioch, where he was graciously received. Arian and Candidus, two Arians, relations also of the emperor, came to him at Antioch, having conceived some hope of his favour. Euzaius also, the bishop of that city, where Arianism was strong, and some other Arians, laboured to ingratiate themselves with the eunuchs of the palace, as their party had done in the reign of Constantius. The Macedonians too, the followers of the deposed bishop of Constantinople, who had taught them to deny the divinity of the Holy Ghost, solicited the emperor for predominancy in the Church. "I hate disputes, replied Jovian; I love and honour men of peace, and promoters of union." The Arians, confounded with such a sentence, communicated with Meletius the orthodox bishop of Antioch, and subscribed the council of Nice. It is difficult to believe their sincerity; under any the most moderate account that can be given of the controversy, Arian duplicity must strike every reader. At any rate Jovian was not to blame; he plainly declared, that he would constrain no man, and he said so sincerely. But power, not mere toleration, was their object. Jovian also strove in vain to heal the division between the followers of Meletius and Paulinus, which has been mentioned above.

The Arians of Alexandria* attempted to gain the episcopal see for a person named Lucius, a man void of all piety, and made application for him to the emperor, with Lucius himself at his head. The friends of Athanasius sent deputies also on their part, to oppose them. The interference of Constantine, and still more of Constantius, in the expulsion of bishops in cities of great note in the empire, had established an unhappy precedent, which was followed too frequently. A short extract of the conferences may throw some light on the character of Jovian, and on the state of religion at that time. "We beg your power, your majesty, your piety," say the Arians, "to give us audience." "Who and whence are you?" "Sir, we are Christians." "Whence, and of what city?" "Of Alexandria." "What do you desire of me?" "To give us a bishop." "I have ordered Athanasius to return to his see." "Sir, this man has been banished many years, for crimes of which he is not cleared." A soldier of the emperor's guard interposed: "Sir, give yourself the trouble to examine who these people are, the remains of the faction of George, the villain who desolated Alexandria." At these words, Jovian (who was on horseback when they met him,) spurred his horse and left them. The Arians were not so repulsed; they presented themselves to Jovian a second time. "We have several heads of accusation against Athanasius, which we are able to prove. It is thirty years since he was banished by Constantine and Constantius of immortal memory." The accusations of ten, twenty, thirty years, replied Jovian, are out of date. I know why he was accused, and how he was banished. A third time Jovian being importuned by the same petitioners, and the deputies of the Athanasians speaking at the same time, Jovian said, "When all speak together, one cannot understand who is in the right. Choose two persons on both sides; I cannot answer both of you." The Arians begged the emperor to set over them any person except Athanasius. "I have made inquiries," said he; "he teaches sound doctrine." "It is true he speaks well," answered the Arians, "but means ill." The emperor replied, "I need no further testimony; if he means ill, he must give an account

of that to God: We men hear words; God alone knows the heart." "The treasurer," said a lawyer, a cynic philosopher, "has taken some houses from me on account of Athanasius." Is Athanasius responsible for the actions of the treasurer? "I have a charge against Athanasius," said another lawyer, named Patalus, a Pagan. What business, said the emperor, has a Pagan like thee to trouble himself about Christians? Enraged at the attempts of the Arians to corrupt the eunuchs of his court, he made them to undergo the torture, to discover the bottom of the intrigue, and said he would treat his first domestics in the same manner, if they followed such measures. He sent Athanasius to his diocese, where he lived ten years longer, and directed the affairs of the church.

Athanasius recalled to his diocese.

The plainness and frank manners of Jovian, mixed with firmness, are evident in this account; so is the inveterate malignity of the Arians; and every serious reader will deplore the power which Satan gains over a people once tinged with the spirit of religious party in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus, and will see matter of caution not to depart from the simplicity of the Gospel.

While Jovian was at Antioch, he was much aspersed by the wits of that city. His person, it was said, was formed at the expense of his mind. The measure of his stature is that of his folly. Calumnies were propagated against him, and the spirit of satire was indulged with much freedom.

But, notwithstanding these censures, the acknowledgments of Pagans themselves in favour of Jovian; his talent of knowing men, and employing them accordingly; his attention to find out persons of merit; his care of Christian doctrine and piety; his integrity and openness; and above all, his strict conscientiousness, like to which I find nothing in pagan heroes and patriots; announced, though not the splendid genius, yet the man of sound understanding, and promised to the world a wise and pious government. It is impossible that Ammianus could have had a mean opinion of him, since, when he speaks of his faults, he owns that he might have lived to correct them. He seems to have been a character of the solid, not the shining kind; the wickedness of the times, I fear, was unworthy of him. He was soon removed, and so

* Opera Athanasii, V. 1. p. 782. See Bletier's Life of Jovian.

very suddenly, that it was suspected, he had not died a natural death; though of this no proof was given. The Christians sincerely wept, the Pagans in general spoke well of him; the Arians soon endeavoured to take advantage of his decease, and the Church was once more involved in persecution.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHURCH UNDER VALENS.—THE DEATH, CHARACTER, AND WRITINGS OF ATHANASIUS.

JOVIAN WAS succeeded by two brothers, Valentinian and Valens; the former governed in the West, the latter in the East. Valentinian followed the plan of Jovian, in the affairs of the church. Valens, a man of weak capacity himself, had not been yet baptized, and seemed as little qualified to judge of matters of religion as of government. Valentinian, whom fraternal affection induced to make him his colleague in the empire, had been in vain advised to choose another person. The Arians, who, under Eudoxius bishop of Constantinople, had ruled the capital in all ecclesiastical affairs, in the time of Constantius, repented to find Valens equally supple and ductile as that emperor. Even the party of Macedonians, a sort of Semi-Arians, who allowed the Son of God to be like the Father, though not of the same substance, and who were likewise enemies to the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, could not gain the favour of the emperor, but were persecuted as well as the orthodox; while Eudoxius with the complete Arians, who would not allow the similarity of the Son to the Father, engrossed all the churches. The Semi-Arians, induced by these circumstances, entered into connexions with Liberius bishop of Rome, and reunited themselves with the orthodox churches of the West; yet one can have no great idea of the sincerity of this meet, as they would have probably persisted in their heresy, if Valens had favoured their notion; many of them, however, might be perverted by the subtleties of disputation, and be more orthodox in their hearts than in their expressions. Valens* ordered all the followers of the Nicene faith to be expelled from Constantinople. In this persecution were included the Novatians: their

churches were ordered to be shut up, as well as their persons to be banished. For the orthodox of the general church had no places of worship from the days of Constantius; and Jovian their friend had not lived to come to his capital. One Agellus, the Novatian bishop, was exiled, a man of admirable sanctity and virtue, and remarkable for his perfect contempt of money. Yet was he restored not long after, and he recovered the churches of his communion. He owed this, under Providence, to one Marcion, a man of learning and piety, a Novatian presbyter, who tutored two daughters of the emperor. On this account the Novatians were at length tolerated; while the general church suffered the rigour of banishment, and was silent by compulsion, and while the Arians tyrannized over all the Christian world in the East. Yet the Novatians were still infested by the Arians, because they cherished and loved in a tender manner their brethren of the general church.*

We must once more see Athanasius attacked by the enemies of Christian piety. About the beginning of the year 367, Valens, at the solicitation of Eudoxius, ordered the bishops who had been deposed in the reign of Constantius, and were afterwards restored, to be expelled from their churches. By virtue of this order, Tatian, governor of Alexandria, attempted to drive Athanasius out of that city. The prelate had the hearts of his people. Long experience of his integrity and virtue, respect for his talents, and compassion for his sufferings had secured him this the most reasonable and the most glorious of all empires. The prefect was so sensible of this, that for some time he dared not proceed to execute his orders. At length, he brake one night with an

Edict of
Valens,
A. D. 367.

* *His. eccl. eccl. eccl.* B. IV. c. 9. Sozomen. This historian having himself a particular acquaintance with the Novatians, we learn something from him concerning this people. I wish he had given us more information. But their charity and tenderness toward the general church in its distress, while they themselves were indulged with toleration, and their suffering some molestation from the reigning party, because of their affection for those who endured persecution for righteousness' sake, reflects an amiable lustre on the character of these Dissenters. And I wish the lesson it is calculated to teach were attended to at this day. Let men who love the faith of the Gospel, and are content to suffer for it in the world, adorn it by brotherly love, and leave political contentions and the arts of ambition to the enemies of the Gospel.

armed force into his church, where he generally lodged, and sought for his person in every place, but in vain. Athanasius, probably warned beforehand of the danger, had retired, and remained for four months concealed in his father's sepulchre. This was the fourth time that he had fled from Alexandria. Valens,

Athanasius flies from Alexandria the fourth time.

however, from the dread he seems to have had of the people, ordered him to be recalled; nor could Lucius, the Arian bishop of Alexandria, prevail on him to give Athanasius any more disturbance. About this time Valens himself received baptism from Eudoxius, who had such an ascendancy over the weak emperor, as to induce him to swear, that he would never depart from the Arian creed.*

A council was held at Laodicea in Phrygia about this time. A few of its canons shall be mentioned, as they will throw some light on the spirit of religion. One of them prohibits the ordination of men lately baptized; and so far agrees with the sacred rule.† The choice of those appointed to the priesthood was not to be left to the people, but the bishops were to be chosen by the metropolitans, after a long probation of their faith and morals. In this, an alteration was doubtless made from the customs which had obtained before the time of Constantine, and the metropolitans now exercised the same power which the Apostles had done, who doubtless ordained pastors in all the churches by their own authority. The council orders‡ clergymen not to lend money upon usury, nor to visit taverns and houses of entertainment, nor to assist at the public shows exhibited at marriages and festivals. A proof, I fear, that their manners were grown more lax and dissolute. The invocation of angels is also solemnly forbidden: a proof that this species of idolatry had already crept into the church, and a condemnation of the practice of the Romanists. Presbyters are forbidden also to practise magic and enchantment: pity, that there should be occasion to make such a canon! On the whole, this council, though it appears seriously bent on the support of good discipline and manners, evidences a great and deep corruption to have taken place in the church of Christ.

Valens himself, being at Tomi, a city of Scythia, near the mouth of the Danube, ordered Brettannio the bishop to meet and communicate with him and his Arian attendants, who came to the bishop's church for that purpose. Brettannio firmly refused, professing his regard for the Nicene faith, and leaving the emperor he went to another church, and all his congregation followed him. Valens with his attendants being left alone, was so enraged, that he ordered the bishop to be banished, though political reasons induced him soon after to permit his return. The Scythians were indignant at the banishment of their bishop, a man renowned among them* for piety and integrity, and Valens dreaded their revolt. Of the conduct of Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen in these times, it will be more proper to speak in the course of their story, as they are men, who deserve to be held out to the more distinct attention of the reader. Antioch was sorely shaken with the conflicts of this persecution. There Arianism triumphed, both in numbers and in power, though the influence of the two orthodox bishops, Meletius and Paulinus, under God, preserved a considerable remnant. For wherever men of firm piety ruled in the churches, they were enabled to check the torrent. On the death of Eudoxius in 370, the Arians chose Demophilus in his room, and Valens approved of the election. The orthodox elected at the same time Evagrius bishop of Constantinople. Valens, incensed, banished both him and the bishop who had dared to ordain him.

Death of Eudoxius, A. D. 370.

On this occasion eighty ecclesiastics were sent to the emperor at Nicomedia, to complain of his conduct. Enraged at their presumption, and yet afraid of a sedition, he gave private orders to Modestus, his prefect, to murder them secretly. The execution of this order deserves to be known in all ages. The prefect pretended that he would send them into banishment, with which they cheerfully acquiesced. But he directed the mariners to set the ship on fire as soon as they were gone to sea. The mariners did so, and going into a boat which followed them, escaped. The burning vessel was driven by a strong west wind into the haven of Dacidizus, on the coast of Bithynia, where it was consumed with the

* Theod. IV. c. 12. Fleury, B. 16. 8.

† 1 Tim. iii. 6. ‡ Fleury, B. XVI. c. 12.

* Soz. B. VI. 21.

ministers.* The intention of concealing what was done, was frustrated; and the wickedness and inhumanity of the murder appeared more odious, by the meanness with which it was contrived.

Casarius, the brother of Gregory Nazianzen, had been recalled to court by Jovian, and Valens made him questor of Bithynia. His brother exhorted him to disengage himself from the world, which at length he did, and died soon after.

Athanasius had the courage to expel from the church the governor of Libya, a man wholly given up to cruelty and debauchery; nor was the world then so degenerated, as to despise altogether the discipline of the church. A council held

A council
at Anti-
och.

at Antioch by the faithful, consisting of a hundred and forty-six bishops, pathetically bewailed the times: and

among other things, they observed, that the infidels laughed at these evils, and staggered the weak; while true Christians avoiding the churches, as being now nurseries of impiety, went into deserts, and lifted up their hands to God with sighs and tears.

Meletius, who was the chief of this council, was banished the third time, and sent into Armenia, his own country. The other bishop, Paulinus, whose flock was small, was spared. The Meletians, deprived of their churches, assembled at the foot of a mountain near Antioch, and heard the word of God. But from this place also they were driven, and many of them were thrown into the Orontes.

Maximus, the philosopher and friend of Julian, was at length made a victim to the jealousy of Valens, for some magical conversations real or pretended.

At Edessa, the orthodox were wont to meet in a field; Valens ordered them to be dispersed; but the resolution of a woman who listened thither as on purpose to suffer martyrdom, staggered his mind, and caused him to cease from the attempt.

Another method was taken: the pastors of Edessa were sent into banishment; some of them were conducted to Antinous,† where observing the greater part of the inhabitants to be Pagans, they employed themselves in taking pains for their eternal salvation. Protagoras particularly taught the children to write and

to read the Psalms of David and suitable passages of the New Testament; and though the account we have here is very defective, there is reason to believe, that the progress of the Gospel was increased by these means.*

Athanasius died in the year 373, after he had been bishop forty-six years; and being desired to nominate a successor, he mentioned Peter, an aged saint, and the faithful companion of his labours. Let us pause a little, to view the writings and character of this great man.

Death of
Athana-
sius,

A. D. 373.

A person so actively employed, and so wholly taken up during the course of a long life with a single controversy, is not likely to leave behind him writings very instructive to after ages. I

His writ-
ings.

run through his works, and find nothing important in them, except what relates to the Arian controversy. As a writer, he is nervous, clear, argumentative, and every where discovers the man of sense, except in the *Life of Anthony the monk*, and other monastic pieces; the superstitions and follies of which unhappy perversion of piety received but too liberal a support from his influence. But such were the times; and in public life, the abuses of Christianity were so many, that I wonder not that the most godly had the strongest relish for monasticism, in an age when the knowledge of the genius of the Gospel was so much darkened. His two treatises against the Gentiles bid the fairest to show his general knowledge and spirit in religion, because they are exempt from the Arian controversy. In them he discovers the source of idolatry to be the corruption of the heart, in consequence of the Fall. Men being fallen from God, cannot erect their minds to things spiritual, but sink down to things earthly and sensual. He allows the evil propensity of nature, and describes its effects very justly; at the same time like Justin, and other of the fathers whom we have seen, he speaks of the free-will of man, and of his power of resisting this propensity, using the same Greek term.† He speaks very solidly of the incarnation of the Son of God, describes it as essential to the recovery of fallen man, and speaks of the propriety of man's being

* Socrates, B. IV. c. 16.

† A place, I suppose, in Thebais in Egypt.

* Fleury, 32. B. V.

† *Antiquitez.*

taught by Him, who is the Wisdom of the Father. Redemption by his cross he speaks of in a manner perfectly scriptural; but little is to be found in him of the experience of these doctrines, and their application to the heart and conscience; nor does he dwell much on the virtues and graces of the Holy Spirit. Opposition to Arianism absorbed his whole soul, and he keeps it in constant view throughout all his writings, or nearly so, except in his two discourses to the Gentiles. His address to Constantius is vehement and persuasive; but, though full of integrity, it is wanting in meekness. In his apology for his flight, he amply vindicates himself by scriptural and apostolical authority. His book on the Psalms explains very justly their excellencies. He shows, that in them is found the whole sum of duty, all the arguments of prayer, all the doctrines of religion, prophecies concerning Jesus Christ, and all the histories of the Old Testament: he observes, with great propriety, that the believer may see in them the state and frame of his own soul, what he himself feels; and let a man's state be what it may, every one may find words adapted to his condition, and a true relief for every trouble. His treatise on the unpardonable sin is a monument of infirmity in a great and noble mind, and such an infirmity as men of great sincerity are more exposed to than others; I mean that of wresting every subject that we handle, to promote the darling object of our own minds. To defend the Trinity was his; I wonder not therefore, that Arianism with him is represented as the "unpardonable sin," and truly the conduct of the Arians in his time would naturally give an edge to his spirit. I have represented things in as faithful a manner as I can from the lights of antiquity which remain to us; and I must say, independently of all doctrinal sentiments, there appears no comparison between the two parties in their moral conduct. Every thing mean and sordid, cruel and inhuman, ambitious and perfidious, is found on the side of Arianism. The fruits of genuine religion evidently appear on the other side, so far as I can discover hitherto. However melancholy may have been the scenes of human wickedness, which we have reviewed, and however faint the marks of godliness in any person, still "real virtue was seen

the attendant of orthodox sentiments alone." Is it to be wondered, that Athanasius, who knew and felt all this, should be betrayed into such an interpretation of the unpardonable sin?

In his defence of the Trinity, he guards it on all sides with extreme exactness. He is not solicitous to remove the mystery; he leaves the account as it always should be left, inadequate and imperfect, clear and exact only so far as the Scripture has explained it. He is not careful to clear it of the objections, and to answer the captious questions of the enemies of the doctrine. But all sorts of opposition to it find in him a just refutation. He asserts every where the Trinity in Unity. Among the rest, the heresy of Apollinarius, who denied to Jesus Christ a human soul, was by him effectually confuted. But not to dwell longer on a subject we have had so much occasion to consider, I observe, that though the creed, commonly called that of Athanasius, be not his, yet it contains precisely his views and sentiments.^a

Athanasius shines, however, more in his life than in his writings; his conduct every where appears consistent and upright, sharpened too much by long and cruel opposition indeed, yet never governed by malice, always principled by the fear of God in this whole controversy. I doubt not but he was raised by a special providence to defend the doctrine of the Trinity; and while men of no religion are blaming his asperity, let us admire the strength of that grace, which kept him so invincibly firm and calmly magnanimous, and through his means preserved to us this precious part of Christian doctrine. The Lord has ever raised up instruments of this strong and hardy cast, to maintain his cause in the world; and let it be remembered, in regard to this great and good man, that after all the abuse thrown on his character respecting persecution, there is very much of persecution indeed, but persecution by him always suffered, never inflicted on others.

The choice of Peter, as his successor at Alexandria, was confirmed by the whole church; and the almost universal respect which was paid to the virtues of Athanasius, seemed to put his election out of the reach of controversy. But imperial violence prevailed. By Euzoios

Comparison of
Trinitarians and
Arians.

^a See Du Pin's view of his works.

of Antioch, Valens was stirred up to oppose Peter; and Lucius, whom Jovian so contemptuously rejected, was introduced by the power of the sword. Then* was seen the insistent cruelty of Magnus a Pagan, whom the mercy of Jovian had spared. Many Athanasians were murdered, and many treated with great outrage; while Arianism, supported by the civil powers, triumphed without control. Nineteen priests and deacons, some very old, were seized by Magnus. "Agree, wretches," said the Pagan, "to the sentiments of the Arians. If your religion be true, God will forgive you for yielding to necessity." "Forbear to importune us," they replied, "we do not believe that God is sometimes Father, and sometimes not. Our fathers at Nice confessed, that the Son is consubstantial with the Father." Whips and tortures, the grief of the godly, and the insults of Jews and apostates, altered not their determination: they were banished to Helipolis in Phœnicia. Palladius a Pagan, the governor of Egypt, sent many to prison, who had presumed to weep; and after he had scourged them, sent twenty-three of them, chiefly monks, to work in the mines. Other scenes of savage cruelty are related; it is tedious and unpleasant to enlarge on them: but it is a pleasure to behold the fruits of Athanasius's labours in the faithful sufferings of so many of his followers. Euzoios, having put Lucius and his Arians into the possession of the churches, and left Alexandria in tears, returned to Antioch. What a toshup was this! But the Christian reader will steadily observe with me, that Christ had all along a real church, and that the cross is her mark, but the cross nicely entered; and were not Euzoios's conduct connected with this truth, his name would deserve no notice in this history.

The monks of Egypt, whose piety moved the common people, were courted by the Arian party; but they offered their necks to the sword, rather than quit the Nicene profession. A number of these were banished, but were afterwards permitted to return.† Peter himself, though imprisoned, found means to escape, and in Europe, where Arianism had no power, he enjoyed a quiet exile.

The piety of Terentius, an officer of Valens, deserves to be recorded. The

emperor, pleased with his services, bade him ask a favour. The man begged the liberty of a place of worship for the orthodox. Valens in a rage tore his petition. Terentius gathering the fragments of the petition, said, I have received a gift from you, O, Emperor. Let the Judge of all the earth judge between us.‡

At the same time among the Goths, by the cruelty of their king Athanaric, numbers of godly men were murdered for the sake of their Redeemer. Eusebius of Samosata was expelled by the Arian tyranny from his see. He took particular care to preserve the life of the imperial messenger before his departure, and when desired with floods of tears by his flock not to leave them to the mercy of the wolves, he read to them that passage of the Apostle, which commands obedience to the powers that be.† Excellent servant of Christ!

Eusebius of Samosata is one of those bishops of whom it were to be wished we had a more distinct account. His zeal had exposed him to this persecution. In the disguise of a soldier he had travelled through various parts of the East, to confirm the desolate churches, and to supply them with pastors. When the messenger of his banishment came to him, "Conceal the occasion of your journey," says he, "or you will be thrown into the river, and your death laid to my charge." He himself retired with great secrecy, yet was he followed by the people. The testimony he gave of the primitive duty of passiveness under injuries was much needed in these times, when men had too much forgotten to suffer with meekness. He received from his friends very little for his journey, though their liberality would have supplied him abundantly. He prayed, and instructed the people, and then retired in peace.

It will be proper to finish here all that I can find concerning Eusebius which is material. In the time of Constantius he had been intrusted with the care of a decree of a council held at Antioch, which the Arian party afterwards persuaded Constantius to order him to deliver up. He justly observed, that what had been delivered by a synod, could only be returned by the authority of the same synod. Even a menace, that he should have his hand cut off, prevailed not with him. Constantius admired his fortitude,

* Theod. IV. 22.
Vol. I.

2 E

† Soz. VI. 30.

• Cent. Magd.

† Rom. xiii.

and desisted.* No wonder that the people of Samosata, after his exile under Valens, admiring a man so firm and sincere, refused to attend the religious instructions of the successor who was forced upon them; who being a man of a meek temper, took much pains to ingratiate himself with them, but in vain. Eunomius (that was his name) left them, because he could not gain their favour. The Arians put in his room one Lucius, who acted with more violence, and encouraged the secular power to persecute.† Eusebius however lived long enough to recover his see of Samosata after the death of Valens, and was at last killed with a tile by a zealous Arian woman in the town of Dolicha, whither he was come to ordain an orthodox pastor, the place being very hostile to the doctrine of the Trinity. He died in a very charitable spirit, insisting with his friends, that the woman should not be brought to justice on his account, and obliged them to swear that they would gratify him in this.‡

Some further views of the church under

Death of
Valens,

A. D. 378.

Valens will appear in the lives of Basil and Gregory Nazianzen, whom I studiously pass over for the present. Valens

perished in a battle with the Goths in the year 378, after having reigned fourteen years.

Valens, however, from whatever cause, a little before his death, recalled the exiled bishops. Lucius was driven from Alexandria; Pater recovered his see, and Arianism lost its external dominion a little before the death of its benefactor.

The Goths, who had settled on the Roman side of the Danube, in the dominions of Valens, were by the advice of Eudoxius, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, brought over to Arianism. Valens proposed that they should agree with him in doctrine; but they declared, that they never would recede from the doctrine of their ancestors. Ulfila, the bishop of the whole nation, of whom more hereafter, was induced, by the presents and complaisance of Eudoxius, to attempt to draw them over to the emperor's doctrine; and his argument, which I suppose he had from Eudoxius, was, that it was only a verbal dispute. Hence the Gothic Christians continued to assert,

that the Father was greater than the Son, but would not allow the Son to be a creature. Nor yet did they wholly depart from the faith of their ancestors. For Ulfila assured them, that there was no difference of doctrine at all, but that the rupture had arisen from a vain contention.*

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHURCH UNDER VALENTINIAN—
AMBRÓSE APPOINTED BISHOP OF MILAN.

LET us turn our eyes to a more cheerful prospect in the West; in the East, the only comfortable circumstance has been, that God left not himself without witness, but marked his real church by a number of faithful sufferers. Valentinian, the elder brother of Valens, made a law in the beginning of his reign, that no man should be compelled in religion.† He restrained, however, this general licence soon after, partly by seizing the revenues of the heathen temples, which the emperors annexed to their own patrimony, and partly by the prohibition of divinations and enchantments. On a representation of the governor of Greece, Achaia was allowed still to practise her heathenish follies. Other laws in favour of Christians followed.‡ One of the supposed oracles of Greece had declared that Christianity should last only 365 years in the world. This period was now expired, and the event had falsified the prediction. In other instances this emperor was very indulgent to the Pagans, who might see themselves, both in the East and West, treated with far more lenity and favour than the Church of Christ was in the East during the whole reign of the two brothers. Themistius, the Pagan philosopher, was struck with the cruelty of Valens; and while he insinuated that perhaps God was delighted with the diversity of sentiments in the world concerning him, he entreated the emperor not to persecute any longer. This is one instance of the illegitimate charity now so

* Theodoret, end of B. IV.

† Though the laws of Valentinian run both in his name and that of his brother, I speak of them as his laws exclusively, because it may fairly be presumed, that he was the principal agent.

‡ See Cave's Introduction, Sect. IV.

* Theodoret. B. II. c. 32. † Ib. B. IV. c. 15.
‡ Ib. V. c. 4.

common in the world, which founds the principles of moderation on scepticism, instead of that divine love which is the glory of the Christian religion.

Auxentius, the Arian bishop of Milan, being assisted by Eusebius of Vercellæ, and by Hilary of Poitiers,* imposed on Valentianus by a dexterous use of those ambiguities of speech, in which the Arians all along excelled. Nor is it to be wondered at, that Valentianian should be deceived, since even to this day the patrons of Arianism, by largely dwelling on the perfections of the Son of God, with a cautious omission of the term consubstantial, in a similar way frequently prevail on many, who do not or will not understand the true grounds of the controversy, to suppose that the difference of opinion is merely verbal. Hilary contended, that if this were really the case, the Arians could have no reason to avoid an explicit acknowledgment of the whole truth. To this it may justly be added, that their constant support of those who were undoubted opponents of the divinity of Jesus, and their constant enmity against its explicit defenders, evince the difference to be real, not imaginary; and so it will be felt by every one who feels the worth of his soul, and is forced to see the difference between committing its salvation to the Creator and the creature. With equal justice Hilary complained of the Arian method of supporting their creed by military and imperial power. But he complained in vain; the duplicity of Auxentius prevailed, and he was suffered to continue at Milan in the practice of undermining the faith, without openly attacking it; the constant method of heresy in all ages. Whereas divine truth speaks directly and plainly, and must do so, whatever be the consequence. And in this sincerity the church must continue to the

end, supported not by political arts, but by divine influence.

In the year 366, died Liberius of Rome. How far he really recovered from his fall under

Constantius, is not very apparent. He was succeeded by Damasus, who however was not established in his see without a contest with Ursinus, which cost a number of lives. So much were Christian bishops degenerated. But it

should be observed, that there was a material difference in these times between pastors of great cities and those of smaller. What I mean, is well illustrated by Ammianus.* "When I consider," says he, "the magnificence and grandeur of Rome, I do not deny, but that those who are ambitious of this dignity, ought to use all their endeavours to arrive at it; since they by this means procure a certain settlement, where they are enriched by the offerings of the ladies: they ride in chariots, richly clothed; and feast so splendidly, that their tables surpass even those of kings. They might be truly happy, if, contemning the splendour of Rome, they lived like some bishops of the provinces, who by the plainness of their diet, their mean apparel, and the modesty of their looks, which are turned towards the ground, make themselves acceptable to the eternal God and his true worshippers."

Thus far this sensible and candid Pagan, who by the concluding part of the passage appears to have imbibed some Christian notions, and to support that mongrel character, which I have elsewhere attributed to him. While we lament how full 'history is of these splendid and opulent bishops, and how scanty our materials are concerning the humble and obscure ones, it behoves us to be on our guard against the malignant intimations of profane historians, who represent the church in these times as altogether corrupt. It was very much so at Rome, at Antioch, at Constantinople, and other large cities, especially among the great and the rich. In the story of these, we see continually what an enemy riches are to the divine life. But among the lower orders, and in obscure places, by the confession of Ammianus, upright and exemplary pastors were not wanting; and if we had an historical view of their labours and success, I doubt not but the Church of Christ, even in the fourth century, would be seen with other eyes than it is by many.

I am endeavouring to catch the features of this Church, wherever I can find them in this obscure region. I have distinguished formerly three species of dissenters; the Novatians, the Meletians and the Donatists. The first are by far the most respectable: of the second little is known, and that little is not to their

* I purposely avoid entering into details of the acts of this great man, as well as of some others, because their lives deserve to be considered as distinct articles.

* Fleury, B. XVI. 2.

credit: the third are flagitious, by the confession of all writers. A fourth appears, the Luciferians, who, if they imbibed the spirit of Lucifer, must have been firm and sincere in the love of the truth. In the year 374, the emperor ordered all who held unlawful

Valens' edict against unlawful assemblies, A. D. 374.

assemblies to be banished a hundred miles from Rome. In prosecution of this edict, Damasus seems to have caused a Luciferian presbyter to be apprehended, who held a congregation by night in a private house; and he and some of the same class were banished. Notwithstanding this severity, Damasus could not prevent these dissenters from having a bishop of their own at Rome, called Aurelius, who was succeeded by Ephesus, who also kept his station at Rome, notwithstanding the endeavours of Damasus to remove him. Gregory of Elvira in Spain was another of their bishops, a man whose firmness was extolled by Eusebius of Vercellæ. The Donatists had likewise a bishop at Rome, and another in Spain. But violence and ferocity still mark this people.*

I have represented as fairly as I could the lights of history. The reader may judge for himself, whether in the general church, we do not seem to behold the first and most dignified rulers degenerated. Damasus, orthodox and violent in the support of orthodoxy, without humility and piety, is as strong a contrast to the primitive bishops, as Sharp, archbishop of St. Andrew's, in the time of Charles II. is to our first reformers. The persecuted Luciferians may seem to resemble the Puritans of the same period; while such men as Eusebius of Vercellæ, and Hilary of Poitiers, may be likened to archbishop Leighton. But though the spirit of the Gospel probably prevailed most among the Luciferians, yet, as I have already observed, this spirit was still in a degree preserved among the inferior and obscure pastors of the general church. But a new star is going to appear in the Western world, and it behooves us to attend to its lustre.

Ambrose succeeded the Arian Auxentius at Milan, who died in the year 374. He was born about the year 338, while his father was the emperor's lieutenant in France. He was the young-

est of three children, Marcellina and Satorius being born before him. After his father's decease,* his mother with the family returned to Rome, where he made himself master of all the learning that Greece and Latium could afford; at the same time his sister Marcellina, who had devoted herself to a state of virginity, instructed him with much success in the principles of godliness. Being grown to maturity, he pleaded causes with so much dexterity, that he was soon taken notice of by Anicius Probus, pretorian prefect of Italy, who made choice of him to be of his council: and having authority to appoint governors to several provinces, when he gave a commission to him, he said, "Go, and govern more like a bishop than a judge." Ambrose in this office resided at Milan for five years, and was renowned for prudence and justice; when one of those sudden turns of providence, which are so conspicuous in the lives of many persons of eminent godliness, threw him into a course of life extremely different from his former.

Auxentius, by artifice and dexterity had, as we have seen, imposed on Valentinian, and preserved his seat to his death in the year 374. Immediately the bishops of the province met together concerning the election of a successor. The emperor sent for them, and told them, that they, as men best acquainted with the sacred volume, ought to understand better than he the qualifications necessary for so important a station. "Choose a man," said he, "fit to instruct by life as well as by doctrine, and we ourselves will readily submit our sceptres to his counsels and direction, and, as men obnoxious to human frailty, will receive his reproofs and admonitions as wholesome physic." The bishops besought him to nominate the person, but Valentinian was resolute in referring the determination to them, as fitter than himself to decide.† In the meantime factions were strong, and the

* See Paulinus's Life of Ambrose prefixed to the works of that Saint. Cave; Fleury.

† Those who have learnt from modern politics to exclude men of the sacred office from any regard in the councils of princes, will despise the weakness of Valentinian. Those who remember how useful the advice of Jehoida was to Jash, and who believe that piety and the fear of God are of some consequence in the conduct of human affairs, will commend his conscientiousness and his modesty.

Arian party vigorously laboured to provide a successor worthy of Auxentius. The city was divided, every thing tended toward a tumult, the bishops were consulting, and Ambrose, hearing of these things, hastened to the church of Milan, and exhorted the people to peace and submission to the laws. His speech being finished, an infant's voice was heard in the crowd, "Ambrose is bishop!" The hint was taken at once, the whole assembly cried out, "Ambrose shall be the man!" The factions agreed immediately,* and he whom secular pursuits had seemed to preclude from the notice of either party, was suddenly elected by universal consent.

Ambrose was astonished, and peremptorily refused; nor was any person ever more desirous to obtain the office of a bishop, than he was to avoid it. He even used methods which sound strange in our ears, and are by no means justifiable. By exercising severity on malefactors, and by encouraging harlots to come into his house, he took pains to convince them, that he was not that character of mildness and chastity, which he undoubtedly was, and which all believed him to be. This extraordinary hypocrisy was, however, easily detected. Finding it was vain to stem the torrent, he stole out of Milan at midnight, but missing his way, and wandering all night, he found himself in the morning at the gate of Milan. A guard was placed about his person, till the emperor's pleasure should be known, because his consent was necessary to part with a subject in office. Valentinian sincerely consented; and the consent of Ambrose himself alone was wanting. It is pleasing to see the testimony which the human mind, when left to itself, in all ages, gives in favour of modesty and integrity, in consequence of the law written on the heart, which all the corruption of nature and the artifice of Satan cannot easily efface. Ambrose again made his escape, and hid himself in the country-house of a friend. A menacing edict of the emperor brought him again to Milan, because he dared not expose his friend to the resentment of the emperor. Ambrose yielded at length, and Valentinian gave thanks to God and our Saviour, that it had pleased him to make choice of the very person to take care of

men's souls, whom he had himself before appointed to preside over their temporal concerns. Valentinian received his general admonitions with reverence; and in particular, hearing him represent the faults of some in authority with great plainness: "I knew," said the emperor, "the honesty of your character before this time, yet I consented to your ordination; follow the divine rules, and cure the maladies into which we are prone to fall."

Ambrose was then about thirty-six years old. Immediately he gave to the church and to the poor all the gold and silver which he had. He gave also his lands to the church, reserving the annual income of them for the use of his sister Marcellina. His family he committed to the care of his brother Satyrus. Thus disengaged from temporal concerns, he gave up himself wholly to the ministry. Having read little else than profane authors, he first applied himself to the study of the Scriptures. Whatever time he could spare from business he devoted to reading; and this he continued to do after he had attained a good degree of knowledge.† I wish Origen had been less the object of his study. But the renown of that Father was great, and this was not an age of evangelical perspicuity. His public labours went hand in hand with his studies. He preached every Lord's day. Arianism through his labours was expelled from Italy.

There was a presbyter of Rome, named Simplician, a man of eminent learning and piety, whom he drew over to Milan, and under whose tuition he improved in theology. For his knowledge must have been very confined when he entered upon his office, and what is very rare, he knew it to be so. Simplician he ever loved and revered. We shall hear again of this presbyter, when we come to the conversion of Augustine. It pleased God to make him a useful instrument for the instruction of both these luminaries of the Western church, and as he out-lived Ambrose, though very old, he was appointed his successor in the church of Milan. From Simplician, as an instrument, it pleased God successively to convey both to Ambrose and to Augustine that fire of divine love and genuine simplicity in religion, which had very much decayed since the days of Cyprian; and in this slow, but effectual method, the Lord was

* See, B. IV. 30. See, B. VI. 24.

† Aug. Confess. B. VI. c. 3.

preparing the way for another great effusion of his Spirit. Ambrose now gave himself wholly to the work of the Lord, and restored purity of doctrine and discipline.

A council of bishops held about this time at Valence, may deserve to be mentioned, on account of one of its rules, which throws some light on the religious state of the times. One Acceptus having been demanded as bishop by the church of Frejus, and having falsely accused himself of some great crime to prevent his ordination, the fathers of the council say, that to cut off occasions of scandal from the profane, they had determined that the testimony which every one gives of himself shall be treated as true, though they were not ignorant that many had acted in this manner in order to avoid the priesthood. The deceit of Ambrose, in endeavouring to appear what he was not, seems then to have been no singular case. Modesty, tinged with superstition, was a characteristic of the best characters of this age. Evangelical light being dim, the spirit of bondage much prevailed among real saints. Let us be thankful for the clearer light of divine truth, which now shines in the church, and that a good man may enter into holy orders without that excess of fear, which prevailed over Ambrose and Acceptus. But while we wonder that men could use such marvellous arts of falsehood, through modesty and conscientious awe, let us not forget that a future age may be as much astonished at the fearless spirit, with which such numbers can, in our days, rush into the church of Christ, with no other views than those of this world; and let us bewail their intrepid audacity, while we smile at the superstitious simplicity of the age we are now reviewing.

Valentinian died in the year 375, after a reign of eleven years; survived by his brother Valens about three years. Violent anger had ever been his predominant evil, and a fit of passion at length cost him his life. Of some men, we must say with the Apostle, that their sins follow after, while others evidence in this life what they are. Of the former dubious sort seems to have been the emperor Valentinian. Fierce and savage by nature, though of excellent understanding, and, when cool, of the soundest judgment, we have seen him modestly submitting himself to the judg-

ment of bishops in divine things, and also zealous in religion, so far as his knowledge would permit, which seems to have been very small. We are astonished to behold the imperious lion turned into a gentle lamb; and the best use to be made of his character is, to prove how extremely beneficial it is to human society, that princes should be men of some religion. Without this check, Valentinian might have been one of the worst of tyrants; but by the sole means of religion he passes for one of the better sort of princes.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST UNDER GRATIAN AND THEODOSIUS, TILL THE DEATH OF THE FORMER.

GRATIAN, the elder son of Valentinian, succeeded him in Gaul, Spain, and Britain. His younger son, an infant, succeeded in Italy, and the rest of the Western world. And some time after Gratian chose Theodosius as his colleague, who reigned in the East.

From his early years there appear unquestionable marks of real godliness in Gratian, to a degree beyond any thing that has yet been seen in any Roman emperor. One of his first actions demonstrates it. The title of highpriest always belonged to the Roman princes. He justly observed, that as its whole nature was idolatrous, it became not a Christian to assume it. He therefore refused the habit, though the Pagans still gave him the title.

As he was destitute of that ambition which Roman pride had ever indulged, he chose a colleague, for the East, of great abilities, purely for the good of the states, and managed the concerns of his infant brother at Rome with the affection of a father. There, from the beginning of his reign, Gracchus* the prefect, as yet only a catechumen, laboured earnestly to subdue idolatry. The mind of this young prince being strongly fixed on divine things, and being conscious of ignorance, he wrote to Ambrose of Milan to this effect:† “Gratian Augustus to Ambrose the religious priest of Almighty God. I much desire to be present in

* Fleury, B. XVIII. 24.

† Ambrose's Epistles, B. V. 25, 26.

body with him whom I remember absent, and with whom I am united in mind. Come to me immediately, holy priest, that you may teach the doctrine of salvation to one who truly believes; not that he may study for contention, or seek to embrace God rather verbally than mentally, but that the revelation of the Divinity may dwell more intimately in my breast. For He whom I do not deny, whom I own as my Lord and my God, will not fail to teach me. I would not conceive so meanly of him as to make him a mere creature like myself, who own that I can add nothing to Christ. And yet while I seek to please the Father in celebrating the Son, I do not fear lest the Father should envy the honours ascribed to his Son; nor do I think so highly of my powers of commendation, as to suppose that I can increase the Divinity by my words. I am weak and frail, I extol him as I can, not as the Divinity deserves. With respect to that treatise which you gave me, I beg you would make additions to it by scriptural arguments, to prove the proper Deity of the Holy Ghost." Ambrose, delighted with the vein of serious attention to divine subjects, which appears in this letter, answered him in an ecstasy of satisfaction.—"Most Christian prince," says he, "modesty, not want of affection, has hitherto prevented me from waiting upon you. If, however, I was not with you personally, I have been present with my prayers, in which consists still more the duty of a pastor. I use no flattery: you need it not; and moreover it is quite foreign to my office. Our Judge whom you confess, and in whom you piously believe, knows that my bowels are refreshed with your faith, your salvation, and your glory; and that I pray for you not only as in public duty bound, but even with personal affection.—He alone hath taught you, who said, *He that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father.*" Toward the close, he reminds him, that his own arguments for the divinity of the Son, expressed in his letter, are equally conclusive for the divinity of the Holy Ghost, whom we ought not to think the Father to envy, nor ourselves to be on an equal footing with him, who are mere creatures. Some writings of Ambrose remain to us as the consequence of Gratian's request.

The errors of good men have in some instances proved prejudicial to the church. This was unhappily the case with Am-

brose. All the world bore testimony to his sincerity, charity, and piety: but he had not strength to withstand the torrent of superstition, which for some time had been growing. He even augmented it by his immoderate encomiums on virginity. The little acquaintance he had with the Scriptures before his ordination, and the influence of his sister Marcellina, a zealous devotee, will account for this. He wrote treatises on the subject: he reduced the rules of it to a sort of system, and exposed himself to the ill-will of parents, by inducing a considerable number of young women to follow them. It must be confessed, however, that he taught the essentials of Christian faith and love, and built his **WOOD, HAY, AND STUBBLE*** on the true foundation. He had no other arms but those of persuasion, and his great success showed the piety, as well as superstition of many of the female sex.†

Another part of his conduct was more worthy of his understanding. The ravages of the Goths gave him an opportunity to exercise his liberality. He scrupled not to apply the vessels of the church to the redemption of captives, and vindicated himself against those who censured his conduct.‡ In the instruction of catechumens he employed so much pains, that five bishops could scarcely go through so much labour as he alone. At **SIRMION** in **Illyricum**, the Arian bishop **Photinus** had caused a wide departure from the faith: and there being a vacancy in the year 379, Ambrose was sent for to attend the election of a new bishop. The Empress **Justina**, mother of young **Valentinian**, resided there at the time.§ She had received a predilection for Arianism, and endeavoured by her authority and influence to expel Ambrose from the church. He continued, however, in his tribunal, though insulted and harassed by the mob. An Arian woman, particularly, had the impudence to lay hold of his habit, and attempt to draw him among the women, who intended to drag him out of the church. "Though I am unworthy of the priesthood," said he, "it does not become you to lay hands on a pastor; you ought to fear the judgment of God." It is re-

* 1 Cor. III. 12.

† *Paulinus's Life of Ambrose.*

‡ *Ambrose de Virg. 3 books. 11 Offic. Amb.*

§ *Paulinus.*

markable, that she died the next day. The minds of men were struck with awe, and Arsenius, an orthodox minister, was elected without molestation. Another story of the same kind deserves to be mentioned here. Two courtiers of the emperor Gratian, being Arians, came to Ambrose, and desired him to preach on our Lord's Incarnation, promising that they would come to hear him the next day. But they, meaning nothing except ridicule and scorn, took their horses, and rode out of town. It is remarkable, that they were both thrown from their horses, and perished. The congregation in the meantime growing impatient under the delay, Ambrose went up into the pulpit, and told them, that he was come to pay his debt, but found not his yesterday's creditors to receive it; and then preached on the subject.* Those, with whom one sort of doctrine is as valuable as another, will find themselves little disposed to relish or believe stories of this kind. But the laws of history require that, where such remarkable facts seem unquestionable, they should not be suppressed, whatever inferences men may choose to draw from them. The humility and piety connected with the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity are well understood by every Christian. But the foundation was here laid for the enmity of Justina, which afterwards broke out against Ambrose in a remarkable manner. At Antioch, Meletius was now restored, and the churches which had long been afflicted, recovered breath. Constantinople for forty years had been in subjection to Arian impiety and tyranny. By this time few remained in this great city, who knew any thing scriptural; truth and godliness had fled; the times were, however, now favourable for the recovery of the profession of the Gospel, and Gregory of Nazianzum was appointed for this purpose. He found the city in a state little removed from heathenism.

In the year 380, Theodosius, desirous of co-operating with Gregory and other zealous pastors in the revival of Christianity in the East, published a law, by

Orthodoxy of Theodosius,
A. D. 380.

which he reprobated the heresy of Arius, and expressed his warm approbation of the Nicene faith. He gave notice to Demophilus, the Arian bishop of Constantinople, to

embrace the Nicene creed, to unite the people, and to live in peace. Demophilus rejecting his proposal, the emperor ordered him to give up the churches. "If they persecute us in one city," said the heresiarch to the people of his communion, "our Master orders us to flee to another. To-morrow, therefore, I purpose to hold our assemblies without the city." He found, however, little encouragement to proceed, and afterwards retired to Berea, where he died six years after. Thus within forty years from the time that Eusebius of Nicomedia was violently intruded into Constantinople in the room of Paul, the sacred places were restored to the Church of Christ. For so I shall venture to call the Trinitarians, however low and reduced the spirit of godliness was, especially in the East; not only because they held the doctrine of truth, but because whatever of the true spirit of the Gospel was found any where, rested with them. If the reader recollect the barbarities exercised on Paul, and the cruel conduct of the Arians, while in power, he will be struck with the difference between Theodosius and Gregory on one side, and Constantius and Eusebius on the other. I am far from undertaking to vindicate all the proceedings of the patrons of the Nicene faith; but undoubtedly their conduct was full of patience and meekness, compared with that of their opponents. Constantinople was not now made a scene of carnage and violence. Men who fear God will exercise their secular prosperity in religion only to defend the truth, not to persecute its foes. And this is another instance, to be added to the many, which have appeared, of the connexion between Christian principles and holy practice.

Gregory being now confirmed in the see of Constantinople, the emperor called a council in that city to settle the distracted state of the Eastern church. There came thither three hundred and fifty bishops. But it was found much easier to expel Arianism and corruption externally than internally. The council was very confused and disorderly, greatly inferior in piety and wisdom to that of Nice, though it be called the second general council. One of the holiest men there was Meletius of Antioch, who died at Constantinople. Gregory justly observed, that as Paulinus

The second General Council held at Constantinople,
A. D. 381.

* Paulinus's Life of Ambrose.

was sound in the faith, and of unexceptionable character, there could now be no reason why the unhappy breach, so long continued in that church, should not at once be healed by confirming him in the succession. But faction was high, and charity was low at this time; he was overruled by the immoderate; and Flavian was constituted the successor of Meletius, as if they took pleasure in lengthening the reign of schism a little: for Paulinus was far advanced in years. In this affair the younger bishops had influenced the elder, though they could assign no better reason than that, finding the bishops of the West ready to support Gregory's opinion, they thought those of the East ought to prevail, because Jesus Christ in the days of his flesh had appeared in Asia, not in Europe. So easy is it in the decline of piety for Christian formalities to be preserved, while human depravity reigns in the temper and spirit. Gregory in disgust soon after gave up his see.

This council very accurately defined the doctrine of the Trinity, and enlarging a little the Nicene creed, they delivered it, as we now have it in our Communion Service. The Macedonian heresy, which blasphemed the Holy Ghost, gave occasion to a more explicit representation of the third Person in the Trinity, which, it must be owned, is there expressed with scriptural precision and clearness.

About the same time Palladius and Socumenus, two Arian bishops, and the chief supporters of that heresy in the

Two Arian bishops deposed at Aquileia.

West, were condemned, in a council held at Aquileia, by the bishop of Milan, and were formally deposed. It is astonishing with what artificial dexterity Palladius evaded the plain and direct interrogatories of Ambrose,* and while he seemed to honour the Son of God in the same manner as others, and to reduce the contest to a verbal dispute, he still reserved the distinguishing point of Arian. A subtlety ever practised by these heretics!

Theodosius, earnestly desirous to reduce all who professed the Christian name to an uniformity, once more attempted to unite them by a conference at Constantinople. But where the heart was not the same, it appeared that outward conformity produced only hypocri-

sy. The Novatians alone agreed cordially with the general church in sentiment. And Nectarius, the new created bishop of Constantinople, lived on a friendly footing with Agellius, their bishop, a man of piety and of the first character.† In consequence of this, these dissenters obtained from the emperor as ample a toleration as could reasonably be desired. Heavy and tyrannical penalties were denounced in edicts against the rest, which, however, do not appear to have been executed. The denunciation of them itself was, however, wrong; though it must be owned it proceeded from the best intentions on the side of Theodosius, who actually put none of his penal laws against sectaries into execution, and meant only to induce all men to speak alike in the church. How much better, to have taken pains in promoting the propagation of the Gospel itself by the encouragement of zealous pastors, and to have given up the zeal for a chimera of no value, a pretended union without the reality!

In the year 383, Amphilocheus, bishop of Iconium, coming to court with other bishops, paid the usual respects to the emperor, but took no notice

of his son Arcadius, about six years old, who was near the father. Theodosius bade him salute his son. Amphilocheus drew near, and stroking him, said, "God save you, my child." The emperor in anger ordered the old man to be driven from court; who with a loud voice declared, You cannot bear to have your son contemned; be assured, that God in like manner is offended with those who honour not his Son as himself. The emperor was struck with the justness of the remark, and immediately made a law to prohibit the assemblies of the heretics.

In the same year the emperor Gratian lost his life by the rebellion of Maximus, who commanded in Britain.

Deserted by his troops, Gratian fled towards Italy. He found the usual lot of the calamitous, a perfect want of friends; yet he might have escaped to the court of Milan, where his younger brother Valentinian reigned, if he had not been betrayed at Lyons. Adragathius invited him to a feast, and swore to him

The bishop of Iconium's behaviour at the emperor's court,

A. D. 383.

Death of Gratian, A. D. 383.

* Fleury, B. XVIII. 10.

† Socrates, B. V. c. 10.

† John v. 28.

upon the Gospel. The sincere mind of Gratian, measuring others by himself, and as yet not knowing the world (for he was but twenty-four years of age) fell into the snare, and his murder was the consequence. All writers agree, that he was of the best disposition, and well skilled both in religious and secular learning. Ambrose had a peculiar affection for him, and on his account wrote a treatise concerning the Deity of the Holy Ghost. He tells us (and every thing that we know of him confirms the account) that he was godly from his tender years. Chaste, temperate, benevolent, conscientious, he shines in the Church of Christ; but talents for government he seems not to have possessed, and his indolence gave advantage to those who abused both himself and the public. Divine Providence in him hath given us a lesson, that Christ's kingdom is not of this world; even a prince unquestionably pious is denied the common advantage of a natural death.* When he was dying, he bemoaned the absence of Ambrose, and often spake of him.† Those who have received benefit from a pastor in divine things, have often an affection for him, of which the world has no idea. The last movements of a saint are absorbed in divine things, compared with which, the loss of empire weighed as nothing in the mind of Gratian.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HERESY OF PRISCILLIAN—THE CONDUCT OF MARTIN—THE PROGRESS OF SUPERSTITION.

I JOIN these subjects together, to connect the ecclesiastical information of Sulpitius Severus, a historian who belongs to this period, an Aquitanian of great learning, and who wrote a summary of Church history, which he extended to his

own times. What he records of transactions which passed within his own memory, and also what he collected by information of other parts of the empire, may deserve to be very briefly reviewed. Very little shall we find adapted to our purpose; the deep decline of evangelical purity will be the chief discovery we shall make: and he will thus make my apology for evidencing so little of the spirit of Christianity at this period, because so little is to be found.

The Priscillianists, a heretical sect, who seem to have combined all the most pernicious heresies of former times, had already appeared in the time of Gratian, and infected the greatest part of Spain. Priscillian himself, whose character is described by the classical pen of Sulpitius with much elegance and energy,* was exactly fitted for the office which he filled: learned, eloquent, factious, acute, of great powers both of body and mind, and by a spurious modesty and gravity of manners, extremely well qualified to maintain an ascendancy over weak and credulous spirits. Ithacius and Ithacius, the one an aged Presbyter, the other bishop of Soanen, applied to the secular power, in order that, by the decrees of the magistrates, the heretics might be expelled from the cities. The Priscillianists endeavoured to gain friends in Italy; but their corruptions were too glaring to procure them any countenance either from Damasus of Rome, or from Ambrose of Milan.

On the death of Gratian, Maximus the usurper entered victorious into Treves. While Ithacius earnestly pressed him against the Priscillianists, the heresiarch himself appealed to Maximus, who took upon himself the office of deciding. Sulpitius very properly observes, that both parties were highly culpable; the heretics in spreading notions entirely subversive of Christianity, and their accusers in subserving only their own factious and selfish views.

In the meantime, Martin, bishop of Tours, blamed Ithacius for bringing the heretics as criminals before the emperor, and entreated Maximus to abstain from the blood of the unhappy men; he said, it was abundantly sufficient, that having been judged heretics by the sentence of the bishops, they were expelled from the churches, and that it was a new and unheard evil, for a secular judge to interfere

* Fleury, B. XVIII. 27.

† A charitable action of Ambrose, though in opposition to Gratian's views, tended no doubt to raise his character in the eyes of that emperor. A pagan of some rank had spoken contemptuously of Gratian, had been arraigned, and condemned to die. Ambrose, compassionating his case, went to court, to intercede for his life. It was with great difficulty that he could procure admission into the royal presence, where he prevailed at length, by his importunate solicitations, and saved the life of the condemned person.

* Sulp. Sev. p. 419.

in matters purely ecclesiastical. These were Christian sentiments; and deserve to be here mentioned, as describing an honest, though unsuccessful resistance made to the first attempt, which appeared in the church, of punishing heresy with death. I scarcely know any thing more disagreeable to the spirit of a really good man, than to think of punishing capitally, on account of their irreligion, persons who (as he is constrained to believe) are walking the broad road to eternal destruction. He has no need to enter into the political arguments against persecution, which are fashionable in the mouths of infidels. He has much more weighty reasons against it, drawn from the genius of his own religion. To do what in him lies to prevent the conversion of a sinner by shortening his days—how contrary is this to the spirit of Him, who came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them!

Yet there were found men at this time capable of such enormity, and it marks the degeneracy of the age. But Christ had still a church in the West, and Martin persevered with such pious zeal in opposing the hitherto unheard-of innovations, and was himself so much respected for his piety and integrity, that he prevailed at first, and the usurper promised, that he would not proceed to blood against the heretics. Two bishops, Magnus and Rufus, however, changed his resolution afterwards, and he referred the cause to Eudius the prefect, who, after he had found them guilty, (and they appear to have been deluded with all the imperfections of the ancient Gnostics) committed them to custody, and referred them again to the

emperor. Priscillian in the
Prosecution and four
others put
to death.
A. D. 384.
issue was put to death, and
four other leaders of his sect,
A few more were condemned
to die, or to be banished. The
heresy was not extinguished

by this means; for fifteen years after, the contention was extreme between the parties; Priscillian was honoured as a martyr; Christianity never received a greater scandal, though, like all the rest, undeserved, from the motives of its enemies; and men who feared God, and loved moderation and charity, wept and prayed in secret, despised and disregarded by the two parties, who trampled on all the rules of godliness. In the meantime, the selfish and worldly passions triumphed in Spain, and though the form of orthodoxy prevailed, it was evident that the power

was reduced almost to the brink of destruction.

Let us attend to our business, and catch the face of the Church of Christ, if we can. We see her in Ambrose, who, coming to Maximus on an embassy from the younger Valentinian, refused to hold communion with his bishops, who had been concerned in the deaths of the heretics. Maximus, enraged, ordered him to withdraw. Ambrose entered upon his journey very readily, being only grieved to find an old bishop, Hyginus, dragged into exile, though it was evident that he was very near his end. The generous bishop of Milan applied to some of the courtiers, to furnish him with conveniences,* but in vain. A number of holy men, who protested against these barbarities, were themselves aspersed with the charge of heresy, and among the rest, Martin of Tours. Thus in Gaul and Spain there were three parties; first, the Priscillianists, men void of godliness evidently, and bearing the Christian name to disgrace it with a complication of heresies; secondly, men of formal orthodoxy, who persecuted the Priscillianists even to death, and ruined them as a sect, at the same time that they themselves disgraced the Gospel by a life of avarice, faction, and ambition; and thirdly, men who feared God and served him in the Gospel of his Son, condemning the principles of the former by argument only, and the practices of the latter by their meek and charitable conduct. A division of men, not uncommon in the Church of Christ; but let it be remembered, that the last sort are the true branches of the mystical vine, and that they only are to be regarded as belonging to our history.

Martin was born at Ticinum in Italy, and in his youth had served in the army under Constantius and Julian; but against his will. His father, by profession a soldier, had compelled him. For he himself, when only ten years old, went to the church, and gave in his name as a catechumen.† At twelve he had a desire to lead a monastic life. But being compelled to serve in the army, he was remarkable for his exemption from military views, his liberality to the poor, and his reservation of nothing for himself out of the pay which he received, except what was necessary for daily food. At eighteen

* Ambrose, Ep. 27.

† A candidate for baptism.

he was baptized, and two years afterwards, left the army. Sometime after, falling into the hands of robbers among the Alps, he was delivered bound to one of them to be plundered, who, leading him to a retired place, asked him who he was. He answered, "I am a Christian." "Are not you afraid?" "I never was more at ease, because I know the mercy of the Lord to be most present in trials: I am more concerned for you, who by your course of life render yourself unfit to partake of the mercy of Christ." And entering into the argument of religion, he preached the Gospel to the robber. The man believed, attended his instructor to the road, and begged his prayers. The new convert persevered in godliness; and this relation is taken from the biographical account of Martin.*

I must be brief in following our author through other parts of the life of his hero. It was an age of childish credulity; the human mind was sinking fast into ignorance and superstition. The Christian fathers and historians relate things extremely absurd; but this was the fault of the times, not of religion. The Pagan writers, their contemporaries, are no way their superiors. Few stories told by Sulpitius are so good in their matter, and so authentic in their foundation, as this of the robber. It was with difficulty that Martin was at length prevailed on to quit his monastery, and become bishop of Tours, to which office the universal voice of the people called him. He still preserved his monastic taste, and had a monastery two miles out of the city. Here he lived with eighty disciples, who followed his example; they lived in common with extreme austerity. The celebrity of his supposed miracles had a mighty effect on the ignorant Gauls; every common action of his was magnified into a prodigy; heathen temples were destroyed, and churches and monasteries arose in their stead.

Maximus courted the friendship of Martin in vain, who honestly owned, that he could not countenance a murderer and usurper. Maximus pleaded necessity, the providence of God, and that he had slain none except in the field. Overcome at length by importunities, the bishop supped with the usurper. A servant offered the cup to Maximus who directed him to give it to Martin, expecting and

desiring to pledge him. The bishop disappointed his hopes, and gave it to his presbyter.

Wonderful is the account which Sulpitius gives of his patience and charity. But he speaks with partial affection, as of a friend, who in his eyes was faultless. The Scripture does not colour the characters of saints so highly; and I have no ambition to imitate Sulpitius. Many evils attend this spirit of exaggeration. The excessive admiration of men takes off the mind from looking to Jesus, the true and only Mediator. Sulpitius himself professes his hope of obtaining much good through the intercession of his deceased friend. What at first were only the more unguarded effusions of friendship, became at last habits of self-righteous superstition; and one of the worst corruptions of religion was this way gradually introduced, and in the end too firmly established.

Maximus, whatever were his motives, paid assiduous court to Martin, and together with his wife heard him discourse of divine things. She indeed seems to have admired him sincerely, and asked her husband's consent, that she might be allowed as a servant to attend upon him at supper. It was done accordingly; and our author compares her on this account to the queen of Sheba. In these transactions we mark the progress of superstition.

The integrity of Martin appears very conspicuous in opposing the tyranny of Maximus. The latter strove in vain to reconcile him to the maxims of his government in the capital punishment of the Priscillianists, and endeavored to persuade him to communicate with the bishops, who had been urgent in their condemnation. Martin refused, till, understanding that some of the king's servants were going to put certain persons to death for whom he had interceded, in order to save their lives he consented to communicate with men whose conduct he abhorred. Even of this compliance he bitterly repented, guarded against any future communion with the party of Ithacius, and lived afterwards sixteen years in retirement.

On the whole, if less had been said of his miracles, and a more distinct view had been given of his virtues, Martin of Tours would, I believe, appear among us far more estimable. That he was pious, is unquestionable; that his piety was dis-

* Sulp. vitæ Martin.

figured with monastic superstition exceedingly, is no less evident; but Europe and Asia now vied with each other in the promotion of false humility, and I should be ashamed, as well as think the labour ill spent, to recite the stories at length which Sulpitius gives us.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CONDUCT OF AMBROSE UNDER THE EMPEROR VALENTINIAN THE SECOND, AND THE PERSECUTION WHICH HE ENDURED FROM THE EMPEROR'S MOTHER JUSTINA.

JUSTINA, the empress, was a decided patroness of Arianism. After the death of her husband, she began openly to season her son with her doctrine, and to induce him to menace the bishop of Milan. Ambrose exhorted him to support the doctrine received from the Apostles. Young Valentinian, in a rage, ordered his guards to surround the church, and commanded Ambrose to come out of it. "I shall not willingly," replied the bishop, "give up the sheep of Christ to be devoured by wolves. You may use your swords and spears against me; such a death I shall freely undergo."* After this he was exposed to the various frauds and artifices of Justina, who feared to attack him openly. For the people were generally inclined to support the bishop; and his residence in the city where the court was held, at once increased his influence, and exercised his mind with a series of trials.

The Arians were not now the only adversaries of the Church; the Pagans themselves, taking advantage of the minority of Valentinian and the confusions of the empire, endeavoured to recover their ancient establishment. The Senate of Rome consisted still very much of Gentiles; and the pride of family grandeur still induced the most noble to pique themselves on their constancy, and to scorn the innovations of Christianity. Symmachus, a man of learning and great powers of eloquence, headed the party, and endeavoured to persuade the emperor to suffer the altar of Victory to be restored to the Senate-house. Ambrose wrote to Valentinian, that it ill became the Gentiles

to complain of their losses, who never spared the blood of Christians, and who refused them under Julian, the common liberty of teaching. "If he is a Pagan who gives you this advice, let him give the same liberty which he takes himself. You compel no man to worship what he does not approve. Here the whole Senate, so far as it is Christian, is endangered. Every senator takes his oath at the altar; every person who is obliged to appear before the senate upon oath, takes his oath in the same manner. The divinity of the false gods is evidently allowed by the practice. And Christians are obliged by these means to endure a persecution. But in matters of religion consult with God; and whatever men may say of injuries which they suffer, remember that you injure no man by preferring God Almighty before him."* We have still extant the address of Symmachus to the emperors on the subject in vindication of Pagan idolatry, in which he introduces Raine as a person complaining of the hardships to which she was exposed in her old age. We have also the reply of Ambrose, who introduces Raine observing, that it was not by the favour of those gods that she gained her victories. In answer to the complaint, which the Pagans made of the loss of their revenues, he observes, that the Gospel had increased by poverty and ill-treatment, whereas riches and prosperity seemed necessary to the very existence of ruin religion. And now that the Church has some wealth, he justly glories in the use she made of it, and challenges the Pagans to declare what captives they had redeemed, what poor they had relieved, and to what exiles they had sent alms. But it is not necessary to enlarge on this subject. The advantage of the Christian cause in the promotion of liberality and benevolence among mankind, above all religions, is perhaps the only thing generally allowed even by infidels. Symmachus being foiled at present, renewed the same attempt before the emperor Theodosius, and was vanquished a second time by the eloquence and influence of Ambrose.

This prelate by his talents in negotiation at the court of Maximus, averted for a time the invasion of Italy from the court of Milan. But nothing could Justinian's move the mind of Justinian in law,

* Theodoret, B. V. c. 13.

* Epistle of Ambrose, 30.

A. D. 386. his favour. In the year 386, she procured a law to enable the Arian congregations to assemble without interruption.

Auxentius, a Scythian, of the same name with the Arian predecessor of Ambrose, was now introduced, under the protection of the empress, into Milan. He challenged Ambrose to hold a disputation with him in the emperor's court; which occasioned the bishop to write to Valentinian, that it was no part of the emperor's business to decide in points of doctrine.* "Let him come to church," says he, "and upon hearing, let the people judge for themselves; and if they like Auxentius better, let them take him: but they have already declared their sentiments." More violent measures were now entered into, and the fortitude of Ambrose was tried in a manner which he had hitherto not experienced. Auxentius moved, that a party of soldiers might be sent to secure for himself the possession of the church called Basilica: and tribunes came to demand it, with the plate and vessels belonging to it. At the same time, there were those who represented, that it was an unreasonable thing, that the emperor should not be allowed to have one place of worship which was agreeable to his conscience. The language was specious, but deceitful. Justina and her son, if they had thought it prudent to exert their authority, might have commanded the use not of one only, but of all the churches: but the demand of the court was, that Ambrose should do what in conscience he could not, that he should, by his own deed, resign the church into Arian hands, which as circumstances then stood, would have been to acknowledge, indirectly at least, the Arian creed. He therefore calmly answered the officers, that if the emperor had sent to demand his house or land, money or goods, he would have freely resigned them, but that he could not deliver that which was committed to his care. In the congregation he that day told the people,† that he would not willingly desert his right: that if compelled, he knew not how to resist. "I can grieve," says he, "I can weep, I can groan. Against arms and soldiers, tears are my arms. Such are the fortifications of a pastor. I neither can nor ought to resist in any other manner. Our Lord

Jesus is Almighty; what he commands to be done shall be fulfilled, nor does it become you to resist the divine sentence." It seemed proper to state in his own words what his conduct was; and it appears he abated nothing of the maxims of passive submission to the civil power, which Christians had ever practised from the days of St. Paul, and that there is not the least ground to accuse Ambrose of disloyalty to his prince. He had served him already faithfully, and we shall see presently that he is again ready to expose himself to danger for his service. The court knew his principles, and seem not to have had the least fear that he should draw the people into a rebellion; but they wished to menace him into a degree of compliance with Arianism.

Ambrose during the suspension of this affair employed the people in singing divine hymns and psalms, at the end of which there was a solemn doxology to the honour of the Trinity. The method of responsive singing had been gradually practised in the East, and was introduced by Ambrose into Milan, whence it was propagated into all the churches. The people were much delighted, their zeal for the doctrine of the Trinity was inflamed, and one of the best judges in the world, who then lived at Milan, owns that his own soul was melted into divine affection on these occasions.*

The demands of the court were now increased; not only the Portian church which stood without the walls, but also the great church newly built within the city, were required to be given up. On the Lord's day after sermon, the catechumens being dismissed, Ambrose went to baptize those who were prepared for that ordinance, when he was told that officers were sent from the court to the Portian church: he went on, however, unmoved in the service, till he was told, that the people having met with Castulus an Arian presbyter in the street, had laid hands on him. Then with prayers and tears he besought God, that no man's blood might be shed, but rather his own, not only for the pious people, but also for the wicked. And he immediately sent some presbyters and deacons, who recovered Castulus safe from the tumult. The court, enraged, sent out warrants for apprehending several merchants and tradesmen; men were put in chains, and vast sums of money

* Epistle of Ambrose, 32.

† Orat. in Auxen. p. 159. Paris edition.

* Aug. Conf. B. 9.

were required to be paid in a little time, which many professed they would pay cheerfully, if they were suffered to enjoy the possession of their faith unmolested. By this time the prisons were full of tradesmen, and the magistrates and men of rank were severely threatened; while the courtiers urged Ambrose with the imperial authority; whom he answered with the same loyalty and firmness as before. The Holy Spirit, said he, in his exhortation to the people, has spoken in you this day, to this effect: **EMPEROR, WE RESPECT, BUT WE DO NOT FIGHT.** The Arians, having few friends among the people, kept themselves within doors. A notary coming to the bishop from the emperor, asked him, whether he intended to usurp the empire? "I have an empire," says he, "it is true, but it lies in weakness, according to that saying of the Apostle, 'when I am weak, then am I strong.' Even Maximus will clear me of this charge, since he will confess it was through my embassy he was kept from the invasion of Italy." Worn out and overcome at length with his resolution, the court, who meant to obtain his consent, rather than to exercise violence, ordered the guards to leave the church, where the bishop had lodged all night; the soldiers having guarded it so close, that none had been suffered to go out; and the people confined there having spent their time in singing psalms. The sums exacted of the tradesmen also were restored. Peace was made for the present, though Ambrose had still reason to fear for himself, and expressed his desire, in the epistle which he wrote to his sister Marcellina, that God would defend his church, and let its enemies rather satiate their rage with his blood.*

The spirit of devotion was kept up all this time among the people, and Ambrose was indefatigable both in praying and preaching. Being called on by the people to consecrate a new church, he told them, that he would, if he could find any relics of martyrs there. Let us not make the superstition of these times greater than it was. It was lamentably great; enough to stain the piety with which it was mixed. We are told, that it had been revealed to him in a vision at night, in what place he might find the relics. But in the epistle which he writes on the subject, he says no such thing. He de-

scribes, however, the finding of the bodies of two martyrs, Protasius and Gervasius, the supposed miracles wrought on the occasion, the dedication of the church, the triumph of orthodox, and the confusion of Arianism. Ambrose himself too much encouraged all this, and in a language which favoured the introduction of other intercessors besides the Lord Jesus Christ, whom yet it is evident he supremely loved, and trusted in for salvation. In all this, the candid and intelligent reader will see the conflict between godliness and superstition maintained in the church of Milan, both existing in some vigour, and each at present checking the growth of the other.*

The news of Maximus's intention to invade Italy arriving at this time, threw the court of Milan into the greatest trepidation. Again Justina implored the bishop to undertake an embassy to the usurper, which he cheerfully undertook, and executed with great fortitude; but it was not in his power to stop the progress of the enemy. Theodosius, who reigned in the East, coming at length to the assistance of Valentinian, put an end to the usurpation and life of Maximus. By his means, the young emperor was induced to forsake his mother's principles, and in form at least to embrace those of Ambrose. Whether he was ever truly converted to God, is not so clear. That he was reconciled to Ambrose, and loved him highly, is certain;

and in the year 392, in which he lost his life by a second usurpation in the West, he sent for Ambrose to come to baptize him. The bishop in his journey heard of his death, with which he was deeply affected, and wrote to Theodosius† concerning him with all the marks of sorrow, and composed a funeral oration in his praise. The rhetorical spirit usually exaggerates on these occasions; but it is inconsistent with the unquestionable integrity of Ambrose to suppose that he did not believe the real conversion of his royal pupil. The oration itself is by no means worthy of Ambrose; the taste is vicious and affected. Indeed panegyria, when it has not an object of magnitude sufficient

The tyrant Maximus defeated, and killed by Theodosius,

A. D. 393.

Valentinian sends for Ambrose to baptize him,

A. D. 392.

* Epist. 33.

* Epist. 85.

† Epist. 34. and de obitu Valentiniani.

to fill the mind, is ever frigid and groveling, because it is continually affecting the sublime, but has not materials to support it with dignity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE CHURCH UNDER THEODOSIUS.

It will be proper to look a little more particularly at the conduct of this prince towards the Church. He had been preserved in his younger years from the jealousy of Valens, who, by some superstition, had been led to suspect those, whose names began with THE, and to seek their destruction. After his exaltation to the empire from a private life by the generous and patriotic choice of Gratian, he reigned in the East, more vigorously supporting Christianity, according to his ideas of it, than any emperor before him. His sense of justice however, determined him to order some Christians to rebuild at their own expense a Jewish synagogue, which they had tumultuously pulled down. I mention with concern, yet with historical veracity, that Ambrose prevailed on him to set aside this sentence, from a mistaken notion of piety, that Christianity should not be obliged to contribute to the erection of a Jewish synagogue. If the Jews were tolerated at all in the empire, the transaction ought certainly to have been looked on as a civil one. This is the first instance I recollect in which a good man was induced, by superstitious motives, to break the essential rules of justice; and it marks the growth of superstition.* Nor is there any thing in the declamatory eloquence of Ambrose, which moves me to pass a different judgment.

The Luciferians still existing, entreated this emperor to grant them liberty of conscience; confessing themselves to be Christians, and contending that it was wrong in others to give them a sectarian name; at the same time declaring that they coveted not the riches and grandeur of other churches, and in their censures not sparing Hilary of Poitiers and Athanasius. These last were doubtless men of great uprightness and integrity. What they themselves were is not so evident as it were to be wished, because of the scantiness of information. They speak with extraordinary respect of Gregory,

bishop of Elvira, as the chief of their communion; a man doubtless of high estimation, because Theodosius himself admits it, and grants them a legal toleration. I have before spoken of this class of dissenters, among whom, I apprehend, it is probable, marks of the presence of God might be found, if their history had come down to us. But the reader who knows how slight our information of these things is, while church history dwells chiefly on what is scandalous, not what is excellent, will not be surprised at my silence. The sect itself vanished soon after.

Theodosius was of a passionate temper, and on a particular occasion was led by it to commit a barbarous action; the circumstances of the story will be the best comment on the character of this emperor, of Ambrose, and of the times. At Thessalonica a tumult was made by the populace, and the emperor's officer was murdered. The news was calculated to try the temper of Theodosius, who ordered the sword to be let loose upon them. Ambrose interceded, and the emperor promised to forgive. But the great officers of the court persuaded him to retract, and to sign a warrant for military execution. It was executed with great cruelty. Seven thousand were massacred in three hours, without trial, and without distinction!

Ambrose† wrote him a faithful letter, reminding him of the charge in the prophecy, that if the priest does not warn the wicked he shall be answerable for it.† "You discover a zeal," says he, "for the faith and fear of God, I own: but your temper is warm, soon to be appeased indeed, if endeavours are used to calm it; but if not regulated, it bears down all before it." He urges the example of David, and shows the impropriety of communicating with him at present. "I love you," says he, "I cherish you, I pray for you; but blame not me, if I give the preference to God." On these principles Ambrose refused to admit Theodosius into the church of Milan. The emperor pleaded the case of David. "Imitate him," says the zealous bishop, "in his repentance, as well as in his sin." Theodosius submitted, and kept from the church eight months. On the feast of the Nativity, he expressed his sorrow with sighs and tears in the

* Epist. 29.

† Amb. Epist. 51.

† Ezek. iii. 18.

presence of Rufinus the master of the offices.* "I weep," said he, "that the temple of God, and consequently heaven is shut from me, which is open to slaves and beggars." Rufinus undertook to persuade the bishop to admit the emperor. Ambrose urged the impropriety of his rude interference, because Rufinus, by his evil counsels, had been the author of the massacre. Rufinus telling him that the emperor was coming, "I will hinder him," says he, "from entering the vestibule; yet if he will play the king, I shall offer him my throat." Rufinus returning, informed the emperor; "I will go, and receive the refusal which I desire," says he. And as he approached the bishop, he added, "I come to offer myself, to submit to what you prescribe." Ambrose enjoined him to do public penance, and to suspend the execution of capital warrants for thirty days in future, in order that the ill effects of intemperate anger might be prevented. The emperor, pulling off his imperial robes, prayed prostrate on the pavement, nor did he put on those robes, till the time of his penance was expired. "My soul cleaveth to the dust," said he, "quicken thou me, according to thy word." The people prayed and wept with him, and he not only complied with the rules of penance, but retained visible marks of compunction and sadness during the rest of his life.

Let us make as candid an estimate, as we can, of this extraordinary affair: I say, as we can. Moderns hardly can be sufficiently candid; so different are our sentiments and views. It is certain that these rules of humiliation are too severe, too formal, and by no means properly calculated to instruct: the growth also of superstition, and the immoderate exercise of episcopal power, are both strikingly evident. But what then? Was Theodosius a mean abject prince, and Ambrose a haughty or hypocritical pontiff? Neither the one nor the other is true. The general life of the former evinces him a great and wise prince, who had the true fear of God before his eyes: and the latter thought he did no more than what the office, which he bore, required; and his affectionate regard for the emperor, and sincere concern for his soul, appear evident. On the whole, the discipline itself thus magnanimously exercised by

Ambrose, and humbly submitted to by Theodosius, when stripped of its superstitions and formalities, was salutary. Who does not see, that the contempt of discipline in our days, among the great, has proved extremely pernicious to the interests of practical religion?

After the murder of Valentinian, a person named Eugenius usurped the empire of the West, who again erected the altar of Victory, and encouraged the Pagans; but their hopes were of short duration. Theodosius soon stripped him of his life and power, and thus became sole master of the Roman world. Under his authority the extirpation of idolatry was carried on with more decisive vigour than ever. At Alexandria the votaries of the renowned temple of Serapis made an insurrection, and murdered a number of Christians. The emperor, being informed of this, declared that he would not suffer the glory of their martyrdom to be stained with any executions, and that he was determined to pardon the murderers in hopes of their conversion, but that the temples, the cause of so much mischief, should be destroyed. There was a remarkable image of Serapis in the temple, of which it had been confidently given out, that if any man touched it, earth would open, the heaven be dissolved, and all things run back into a general chaos. A soldier however, animated by Theophilus the bishop, was so hardy as to make the experiment. With an axe he cleft him down the jaws; an army of mice fled out at the breach he had made; and Serapis was hacked in pieces. On the destruction of idolatry in Egypt, it happened that the Nile did not overflow so plentifully, as it had been wont to do. It is, said the Pagans, because it is affronted at the prevailing impiety; it has not been worshipped with sacrifice,* as it is used to be. Theodosius, being informed of this, declared like a man who believed in God, and preferred heavenly things to earthly; "We ought to prefer our duty to God to the streams of the Nile, and the cause of piety to the fertility of the country; let the Nile never flow again, rather than idolatry be encouraged." The event afforded a fine comment on our Saviour's words, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all other things shall be added unto you." The Nile returned to its course, and rose

* Theodoret, B. V. c. 18.

* Sozom. B. VII. c. 20.

above the highest mark, which, at other times, it seldom reached. The Pagans, overcome in argument, made use of ridicule, the great sanctuary of profaneness, and cried out in their theatres, that the old dotting god was grown so weak, that he could not hold his water. Numbers, however, made a more serious use of the remarkable Providence, and Egypt forsook the superstition, in which for so many ages it had been involved. And thus the country which had nourished idolatry more early and more passionately than others, was made the special scene of the triumphs of God and his Christ.

Libanins, the friend of Julian, was yet alive, and held the office of Pretorian prefect under the emperor. The gentleness of this prince encouraged the sophist to present him with an oration in favour of the temples; in which he trode in the steps of Symmachus, and pleaded the cause of the gods, as well as so had a subject would admit. It is remarkable, that he argued, "Religion ought to be planted in men's minds by reason, not by force." Thus Pagans could now talk, who for ages had acted toward Christians in so different a manner.* The writer of this oration was himself a palpable instance of the clemency of Christian governors compared with Pagan. He lived in a respectable situation, unmolested, the champion of expiring Paganism; and many others were treated in the same manner.

Coming to Rome, the zealous emperor in a deliberate speech endeavoured to persuade the senate, very many of whom still patronised idolatry, to embrace the Christian faith, as the only religion,

which taught men how to obtain pardon of sin, and holiness of life. The Gentile part of them declared, that they would not give up a religion, under which Rome had prospered nearly twelve hundred years. Theodosius told them, that he saw no reason, why he should maintain their religion, and that he would not only cease to furnish the expense out of the exchequer, but abolish the sacrifices themselves. The senators complained, that the neglect of the rites was the grand cause, why the empire declined so much: a specious argument well calculated to gain upon worldly minds, and which had great effect on many Pagans at this time. We may see by and by, what a laboured and animated answer to it was written by one of the greatest and ablest of the fathers. Theodosius now made it a capital crime to sacrifice, or attend the Pagan rites. In vain did the patrons of idolatry exercise their parts and assiduity. The emperor was determined, and issued out a law that made it treasonable to offer sacrifice, or to consult the entrails of beasts.* Incense and perfumes were likewise forbidden. Paganism never lifted up its head after this; habit alone supported it; and objects of sense being removed, zeal was extinguished, and as Theodosius was not disposed to make martyrs, so no Pagans felt any inclination to become such. This great prince expired at Milan in the year 395, about sixty years of age, having reigned sixteen years. And the century before us nearly closes with the full establishment of Christianity in the Roman empire. The religion which was of God made its way through all opposition; that which was of man, supported only by power and custom, failed to thrive, as soon as it lost the ascendant, and within a generation it ceased almost universally to exist among men.

The real character of Theodosius is by no means doubtful. For though the praises of Ambrose may be suspected, yet Aurelius Victor, a Gentile writer, must be credited, when he commends this emperor. His clemency, liberality and generosity were admirable. He was brave and successful in war; but his wars were forced upon him. He was an enemy to drunkenness, and was himself

* At this very time, while Theodosius treated Pagans with moderation, under a Christian establishment, the Christians were treated with unbounded cruelty under a Pagan establishment in Persia. The blameable zeal of Auldas, a bishop, gave the first occasion to it. Moved with divine zeal, as he supposed, he overturned a temple in which the sacred fire was kept.† Isdigerdes the king ordered him to rebuild it, which he refusing, the Christian Churches were ordered to be destroyed, and the man to be slain. A persecution thus commencing on specious grounds, was continued for thirty years with unremitting barbarity. The tortures of Christians were dreadful beyond measure; yet they persevered, and numbers voluntarily endured afflictions, for the joy of eternal life set before them.

† Called *magister*. See Theodoret, B. V. a. 39. Magdeburg. Cent. 4. c. 3.

* Cave's Introduction to the Lives of the Fathers, Vol. II.

Death of
Theodosius,
A. D. 395.

a model of gravity, temperance and chastity in private life. By a law he forbade minstrels and other servants of lewdness to attend at feasts. Thus he is represented by a contemporary, whose account is certainly to be preferred to that of a later writer, the partial Zozimus, who treats every Christian emperor with malignity. I see in Theodosius the triumphs of the Cross; nor in all the Pagan history of the emperors was there one to be compared with him. They had no principles to produce humility. The excess of anger was, as we have seen, his predominant evil; and his case teaches at once two lessons: one is, that the best men need to guard daily against their besetting sins; and the other is, that even our infirmities may be turned to good account by the promotion of our humility, and the Redeemer's glory.

Placidia, the wife of Theodosius, appears to have been a pious and humble person. She was constantly reminding him of the private and low condition, in which they had lived together before his advancement, and exhorting him to attend to the duties of religion. She herself was an edifying pattern of condescension and liberality. The sick, the afflicted, the poor, were relieved not only by her alms, but also by her benevolent attention and labour. Some representing to her, that it was beneath her dignity to take care of hospitals and the houses of mourning, she answered, "the distribution of gold indeed becomes the imperial dignity; but I offer to him, who hath given me that dignity, my personal labours as a token of gratitude." That grace is strong indeed, which melts not under the beams of prosperity. Theodosius was once inclined to converse with Eusebious, an able Arian, who lived at Constantinople, and whom, on account of his heretical practices, he banished thence. But Placidia, who trembled for the salvation of her husband, (I speak seriously what Mr. Gibbon does scornfully, chap. xxviii. vol. iii.) dissuaded him from it. It is pleasant to see orthodox profession constantly united with virtuous practice; this can only be the case where men are taught of God indeed. It ought to be known, that the emperor, who in the cause of God never yielded a tittle to heresy, in his own cause was soft and flexible, and with princely liberality supported the aged mother, and brought up the orphan daughters of the usurper Maximus.

CHAPTER XVII.

REFLECTIONS ON ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.

"BUT what right had Theodosius to make his religion that of the state? Ought not every person, in this matter, to be left to his own conscience? Is it not a violation of the right of private judgment, to impose religious sentiments on the subjects of any government? How therefore can Theodosius, or others who have acted like him, be cleared from the charge of exercising tyrannical authority?"

There was a time, when the fallacy of such notions would have been seen through with less difficulty: at present, the tide of popular opinion runs strong in their favour, and it becomes more necessary to examine their foundation. Moreover, the characters of many of the brightest and best Christians are so interwoven in this question, and the determination of it so much affects the honour of the Divine operations in the propagation of Christianity, that the reader, I trust, will be disposed to receive these reflections with candour and attention, however defective they may appear to him in some respects, or inadequate to the solution of several difficulties, which may be conceived to belong to this intricate subject.

I shall take for granted, that the Gospel is of Divine authority, and ought to be received, on pain of condemnation, by every one, who has the opportunity of hearing it fairly proposed; and that a man ought no more to plead the pretence of conscience for rejecting its fundamentals, than for the commission of murder, theft, or any other criminal action. The reason is, because its light and evidences do so unquestionably carry the impression of divine goodness and divine authority, that wickedness of heart, and not weakness of capacity, must be the cause of the rejection of it by any man. I send those, who are inclined to dispute these positions, to the many proofs given of them by the best evangelical writers in all ages, and above all to the Scriptures themselves, which every where declare, that "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."* If the reader bear these things in memory, he will find some of the most specious objections to ecclesiastical establishments overturned.

* John iii. the end.

For, few persons will, I think, dispute the principle of general expediency and utility, as directly applicable to this important subject. Has not every state a right to ordain what is conducive to its preservation and the good of society? And, for these purposes, is any thing to be compared with right religion and the fear of God? What shall hinder, then, but that the state has the same right to make laws concerning religion, as concerning property, commerce, and agriculture? Is it not a great mistake to separate religious considerations from civil? And while you attempt to do so in theory, will it not be found impossible in practice! And should not laws be always made for practice, and not for mere speculation? The more the governors feel the importance of religion, (I speak not now for the next life, but for this,) the more concerned will they be to establish it. They must do so, if they regard even the temporal good of their subjects.

Then, briefly, these three considerations, namely, 1st, the clear evidences by which Christianity is supported; 2dly, the importance of its doctrines; and, 3dly, general expediency, appear to me to supply materials for an argument in favor of ecclesiastical establishments, which admits of no satisfactory answer. Thus: the Gospel is of divine authority; its fundamentals are revealed with so much clearness, and are of so much consequence to the interests of mankind, that they cannot be rejected without great wickedness of heart; even the wrath of God is declared to abide on him who believeth not the Son. Under these circumstances, will any man, who thinks it the duty of the supreme power to consult the good of the community, believe it a matter of indifference, whether suitable forms of prayer and thanksgiving, or in short, whether a convenient and well-digested Liturgy,* founded on the genuine principles of revealed religion, be composed for public use, and also whether proper persons and places be provided by the state, for the

worship of God and for the instruction of the people?

But besides these general reasons for a national establishment of true religion, there are other considerations relative to the same subject, which merit our attention.

It is certain, that from the earliest ages and under patriarchal government, when holy men were favored with divine revelations, governors taught the true religion, and did not permit their subjects to propagate atheism, idolatry, or false religion.* Abraham, Isaac,† and Jacob,‡ governed their families in this manner; so did Noah before them.§ As families grew into nations, the same practical ideas prevailed. At length, when it pleased God to select one nation for his service, the same sentiments respecting church-establishment continued, whether kings, or judges, or priests, were in possession of the executive power. I am aware that the Jewish government was a THEOCRACY, and that it has therefore many things peculiar to itself; but so much perhaps may safely be inferred from its constitution, that it is lawful for the sovereign authority to make regulations for the support of true religion. It is hardly to be conceived, that God would interweave into his theocracy, what in its own nature is unlawful.

Nor is this argument, which depends upon the general administration of ecclesiastical affairs in the Jewish theocracy, much weakened by any conclusions that may be drawn from particular instances of Divine interference and direction which occur in the history of the same theocracy. When the Jews are ordered to extirpate the Canaanites, and when Agag is hewed in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal, these are occasional instances of Divine vengeance executed against iniquity: we may readily admit, that such instances form no lawful precedents for governments to follow, while we maintain that a mode of ecclesiastical administration ordained by God, and continued for a long series of years, cannot possibly be an improper example for religious magistrates to imitate. However, in contending for the lawfulness of such imitation, I would by no means be understood to include all the particular actions or measures of Jewish governors in ecclesiastical matters; the reasons of these actions or measures may have long

* In such undertakings, the general aim, undoubtedly, ought to be, not to gratify this or that party in unreasonable demands; but to do that, which most tends to the preservation of peace and unity in the church; the procuring of reverence, and the exciting of piety and devotion in the public worship of God; and the taking away of occasion from them that seek occasion of evil or quarrel against the liturgy of the church. See the preface to the Book of Common Prayer.

* Gen. xviii. 19.

† Gen. xxviii. 1.

‡ Gen. xxxv. 2.

§ Gen. ix. toward the end.

since ceased to exist. In this argument I have respect only, in general, to the principal feature of the Jewish constitution, namely, the unquestionable authority, which the magistrate possessed in ecclesiastical regulations: a very remarkable fact! which I recommend to the serious consideration of those Dissenters from our church-establishment, who do not hesitate to pronounce the interference of the civil magistrate in the religious institutions of a nation to be always unlawful.

If these reasons and examples be well weighed, it will hardly be doubted, but that when the Gospel was preached among the Jews, if their Sanhedrim had received it, they would have had a right to make it the established religion of the nation. They might have said, and they probably would have said, "This religion is true and divine; the people cannot reject it without rejecting, in positive wickedness of heart, the authority of God himself; the doctrines of this religion are of the utmost importance: it is therefore expedient, that it should be supported by the state, and we are countenanced in this conclusion by the example of our ancestors."

And in regard to such modern nations, as profess to believe the Scripture-history of the Jews and of Jesus Christ, it may fairly be asked, What are the peculiar circumstances, that should render it improper for the governing powers to feel the influence of the same reasons and examples? Can any good argument be invented to prove, that, in the momentous affairs of religion, they ought not to be actuated by the grand principle of general expediency, when, in matters of less consequence, they evidently show themselves to be so actuated, and no one disputes the propriety of their conduct?

If an inferior state should fear the displeasure of a superior one in its neighbourhood, which might have sufficient strength to destroy it, will any man deny to the supreme power of this lesser state a right to prescribe to its own subjects a mode of conduct that should not give umbrage to the greater? If no man will deny this, let the concession be applied to religion: Irreligion and idolatry provoke the Almighty; a nation wholly given up to them has reason to fear his vengeance, especially if they persist in sinful practices against light and the fairest means of instruction. Then let the magistrate act consistently: let him only ad-

here to the acknowledged principle, that the government ought to promote the good of the state, and the reader sees the consequence. Indeed I do not perceive how the consequence can be avoided, unless it be clearly shown, that there is something in the history of mankind, which should lead us to suspect the soundness of this reasoning. But the practice of holy men of old in different ages, and the history of the earliest nations, and of the Jews, have been proved to be all in favour of religious establishments.

But perhaps we may be called upon in this place to explain a little more distinctly the meaning and extent of that consequence, which we have affirmed to be unavoidable: we may be asked, whether we mean to conclude, that civil magistrates possess an authority, not only by which they may prescribe and support a national establishment of religion, but also by which they may compel the subject to receive the religion which they have instituted, and restrain him from practising his own religion, if he happen to think differently from the powers that be. And then a further question will be asked, whether this be not to encourage persecution, and to exercise a tyranny over the conscience?

Without pretending to satisfy completely either these inquiries, or others of a similar nature that may easily be imagined, I endeavour to separate what is certain and important in this matter from what is doubtful and of less moment. I say without the least hesitation, let no man be compelled to become a Christian; in strict truth, he cannot. Every man not only ought to have, but must have, the right of private judgment. And as it is the absolute duty of Christian states, even for social and political purposes, to endeavour as much as possible to convert all their subjects to the true religion, so it is contrary to duty, that men should be forced to profess what they do not believe, because hypocrisy will be the certain, and an augmented enmity the probable, consequence. It is one thing, however, to leave a man at liberty, whether he will be a believer or not, another to allow him to propagate infidelity and idolatry. So also it is one thing to violate conscience by absolutely insisting on and extorting confessions of faith, another to preserve the sacred institutions of the country from being derided and profaned. The government has a right to restrain

men, and oblige them to keep their irreligion to themselves, the same right as to oblige vessels to perform quarantine, when there is reason to suspect the plague. In this manner acted the great, the pious, Theodosius; he compelled no man; he only restrained. Pagan emperors before him, and Popish princes since, not only restrained, but also compelled. The former is not persecution, the latter is; and I join cordially with the present age in detesting it.

Strange as this conclusion may appear to some, who have been habituated to another mode of thinking, I seem to be supported, not only by the general arguments which have been already advanced, but by the positive word of God. Job declares, that idolatry was an iniquity to be punished by the Judge.* He evidently speaks what was confessed by all to be just: nor is it to be conceived, that the Holy Ghost would have suffered him to impose an iniquitous sentiment on the reader in that manner. I repeat it; the general arguments drawn from expediency, and the example of the Jews, appear to me to justify the civil magistrate, not only in instituting and supporting ecclesiastical establishments, but also in restraining and punishing the propagators of irreligious opinions. For can any thing be more plain, than that if public utility require a provision to be made for the worship of God, and the instruction of the people in true religion, the same utility will require, that every thing should be suppressed which has a tendency to destroy the efficacy of that provision, or diminish its influence? And on these principles acted the good kings, judges, and priests of Israel, in abundance of instances.

Thus, by steps, which to such as have a real reverence for revealed religion, will probably appear neither tedious nor obscure, are we arrived at several conclusions of the utmost consequence in practice.

1. The supreme power has no right to violate liberty of conscience, by extorting confessions of faith.

2. It has a right—To establish the true religion, by positive institutions.

3. To ensure public respect to these institutions, by penal laws.

4. To restrain and punish the propagators of religious opinions.

But it must not be dissembled, that the 4th conclusion contains a proposition in some measure undefined, and involved in difficulties, which require further discussion. Who shall determine, to what extent the authority of the supreme magistrate reaches, in the suppression of irreligious opinions? Where shall we find a common arbiter between him and the people, when they differ in their notions? Or, is the magistrate permitted to restrain and punish the propagators of every sentiment that happens to clash with the tenets, which he has introduced into his establishment?

It is much to be wished, that persons whose principles and habits incline them to give, in some respects, different answers to these inquiries, would, in the first place, seriously endeavour to find out, how far they actually think alike, and by so doing come nearer to a mutual agreement, rather than embitter their tempers by acrimonious disputes concerning inferior matters, widen the breach of Christian friendship, and keep entirely out of sight the more important considerations, in which their judgments might have concurred. Sincere Christians of every denomination who have duly weighed the arguments contained in this chapter, would then, I think, be disposed to admit that the propagators of infidelity, of idolatry, of atheism, and in short of gross irreligion, ought to be effectually restrained and punished by the civil magistrate; and if this be admitted, if men of every station heartily join in this conclusion, the existing laws against irreligion will be vigorously executed, and a great practical point will be gained.

Moreover, it would soon be agreed, that in matters of subordinate consequence, which are evidently not essential to Christianity, the civil magistrate ought not to interfere at all, by restraining or punishing such persons as differ from the establishment, but that he should suffer them to enjoy a complete toleration, and to serve God in their own way.

The essentials of Christianity ought, in my judgment, to be effectually protected by the laws, against the profane and libellous attacks of infidels of every denomination. I do not think it sufficient to say "The truth will take care of itself." The unlearned and the unwary ought not to be exposed to the mischievous effects of such publications. Nevertheless, I am sensible that on this head it seems

* Job xxi. 28.

impossible to define the limits of the authority of the magistrate so precisely, as to exclude all doubt and ambiguity. For, besides that questions will sometimes arise even respecting the essentials themselves, the expediency of the punishment will frequently depend on peculiar circumstances.

There is a great difference, for example, between a serious inquirer after truth, and one, who makes a mock of religion; between the man, who proposes his doubts with modesty, and wishes to have them removed, and the profane sceptic or infidel, who under the pretence of candour and fair investigation, secretly rejoices in disseminating objections, and in undermining the faith of unguarded unbelievers. Add to this; it will not always be prudent to punish even those, who openly and scandalously attack the established religion of the country. In many cases, it will be much better to pass by the impudent offender with contempt, than, by inflicting the penalty he has justly incurred, to excite the curiosity of the public, to make the libellous publication more known, and to render its unworthy author of more consequence.

It is not to be expected, that all should think alike. Let Christian fundamentals therefore be preserved as effectually as possible by an ecclesiastical establishment, and by laws which defend and support it; let there be a toleration for those who profess themselves to hold the essentials of Christianity, but may not think themselves authorized in conscience to conform, in all points, to the established church: This is not only allowable, but perfectly just and equitable. To deny it, is tyranny. Thus acted Theodosius with respect to the Novatians; and this seems the utmost limit of human wisdom in this difficult subject.

The advantages of a Christian establishment are doubtless great: the prevention of general profaneness, the decent observation of the Sabbath, and the opportunity of diffusing the Gospel in dark and barbarous regions; all these things were the evident good consequences of the establishment during the fourth century. But let us suppose, that Constantine and his successors had contented themselves with encouraging the Gospel, and had permitted idolatry and irreligion to continue unchecked. Considering the depravity of human nature, one sees not how, without a miracle, Christianity

would have pervaded the Roman empire at all; half, or the major part, of the Roman world might have remained in irreligion and idolatry to this day. Similar advantages of an establishment may be observed in the history of our own country.

On the other hand, it has been frequently said, that the great corruption of the Gospel began from the days of Constantine. This, I have shown already, was not the case. The corruption had begun a considerable time before, nor does it appear that the decline of vital religion was greater than might have been expected from the general course of things; and if no establishment at all had taken place, it would probably have been more rapid. There would certainly have been this remarkable difference, namely, that half the Roman world, without the aid of the magistrate, would have remained destitute of even the form of Christianity. Corruption of doctrine and discipline ought not to be laid at the door of ecclesiastical establishments, but to be imputed to the degeneracy of men themselves. It would not be hard to point out many persons in our own country, who voluntarily separate from the establishment, and who are nearly void of church-discipline, and even more deeply and more systematically corrupt in doctrine than the most heterodox and unevangelical theologians, who inconsistently remain members of the Church of England. The best ecclesiastical establishments cannot prevent the decay of vital godliness; but under the providence of God, they strengthen the hands of sincere, humble-minded believers, and check the influence both of open and of disguised enemies of Christianity.

The Liturgy alone of the Church of England has long proved, and continues to prove, a strong bulwark against all the efforts of heretical innovators, and corruptors of doctrine.

If these arguments and observations were kept in view, dissenters, who have been accustomed to speak disrespectfully of our ecclesiastical establishment, would probably find more to commend, and less to find fault with.

I shall not be surprised, however, if some persons still feel themselves dissatisfied with the result of these reflections. The subject is arduous and intricate, and has difficulties peculiarly its own. The variety of religious opinions among men

is almost endless; and it is no easy matter to unite into one political mass, a multitude of particles totally heterogeneous with respect to each other. A notion also has been maintained with much industry and zeal, that religion ought to be "fettered by no political institutions." We have been perpetually asked, Why should the majority, why should governors, why should any one dictate to us in religion? Why have not we a right to choose for ourselves, what religion we wish to propagate? However confident others may be of the rectitude of their system, may not we be as confident of the rectitude of ours? Who shall decide between us?

This is specious, and many seem hence inclined entirely to separate religious from political considerations. "Appoint," say they, "a good government, perfectly abstracted from all religion. Let the civil magistrate show himself totally impartial in regard to all modes of faith: let him protect all persons so long as they obey the rules of civil society. Let the rights of conscience be kept sacred: in religion, man is accountable to God alone." Those, who hold out this language, cut the gordian knot at once, and would extricate us from all difficulties, provided they could prove, that it is really practicable to erect a permanent government perfectly detached from all religious sanctions. But this would indeed be "A MIGHTY MAZE WITHOUT A PLAN!" Suppose a number should choose to be atheists: If this reasoning be good, atheism, as well as any other opinion, ought to be tolerated. Then, mark the consequences: the use of oaths, which among all civilized nations has ever been the legitimate method of **ENDING ALL STRIFE**, is at once superseded. He must have a considerable degree of hardihood in politics, who would attempt to support a government contradictory, in its whole plan, to the universal voice of ancient wisdom. Certain it is, that in Scripture all just government is founded on the fear of God, and all legislators, Pagan as well as Jewish and Christian, have, with a greater or less degree of perfection, proceeded on this foundation. The belief of a future state, of some supreme Judge and Arbiter of mankind, has ever been instilled into subjects by all law-givers. It were easy to multiply proofs of this. Suffice it to give the testimony of one, who may be called himself a host,

on account of his great knowledge of mankind, the extent and variety of his learning, and the solidity of his judgment. Plutarch, *advers. Colotem.* p. 1125, after having observed that no man could ever say, that he saw a city without some sort of temple, or some mark of divine worship, subjoins, *αγχα ποτε ας μη δεικνυμαι οδωκεν χαρις, η σωτηρια, τις οργη θεου εστις ανειρηνητης πολιτειας, ουδεσιν υβρις, η παρθενη τρητη.* "A city seems to me more capable of being built without a foundation, than a polity is capable of receiving a system, or having received one, of preserving it, if sentiments of religion be entirely removed."

Will any adversary of religious establishments say, that no considerable part of a community will ever go the length of throwing aside all religion; and that in these enlightened times, men will at least retain the belief of a God and of a future state?—I wish the contrary supposition could be proved an extravagant conjecture.—What are the present doctrines of a neighbouring nation, who have not only rejected the sacred institutions of the Bible, as the Sabbath, and the division of time into periods of seven days, &c. but who have also lately discovered that death is an eternal sleep, and of course, that there is no reason to apprehend a future state of retribution!—When such strides as these are once taken, PRACTICAL atheism can be at no great distance. And as to a merely theoretical belief of one SELF-EXISTENT Cause, or of several self-existent causes, where the Deity is excluded from being the moral governor of the world, such a speculative notion is hardly worth contending for.

It is too true, that the effect of a general belief of religion on men's practice is faint and languid, and by no means proportioned to the importance of the subject; but perhaps we can scarce decide how much better in its moral influence, some principle is than none at all. Men are naturally propense to wickedness; the common sense of mankind has in some degree always confessed this; and here, by a singular concurrence of circumstances, the language of poets has more truth in it than that of philosophers. The former speak the feeling of nature, and confess that men unrestrained will

• Written about the time of the French revolution and the murder of the king, 1792-3.

run into all sorts of wickedness; the latter, by sophistry, have perverted every thing in morals. How is it possible to construct a government, that shall preserve order and decorum for such depraved beings, without some religious establishment! The very attempt itself is to encourage atheism; and men who find the regard of the Divine authority to be left out of the class of political duties, will naturally be led to the greatest and the highest degrees of profaneness. To propagate impurity is to propagate human misery. Shall men be restrained, by the civil sword, from circulating whatever may be hurtful to the health and property of their fellow-creatures; and will you allow them, with no restraint of any kind, to propagate that which will poison the mind, and render human life an intolerable scene of evil! Whether men like the expression of ALLIANCE BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE, or not, there is a natural connection between government and religion, which, in practice, will appear, and have real effects, however plausible it may seem, in theory, to reprobate such connection.

On this occasion the laudable practice of some Dissenters from the established church is frequently appealed to, for the purpose of showing, that love of Christianity and of our country, and all other virtues both public and private, may abound and flourish without the support of any laws in favour of particular opinions.—It is easy to show that there is not much in this argument—and for this end, we need neither dissect it very nicely, nor detract from the merits either of individuals or of whole sects. Let it be admitted, that, in many cases, the conduct of Dissenters has been useful and exemplary. Yet who will deny, that probably the existence, and certainly the energy, of sectaries themselves, frequently depend in some measure on their opposition to the establishment! And happy it is for themselves, happy for the members of the established church, happy for the community at large, when an opposition of this sort shows itself in producing a virtuous emulation. We may then expect to see Christian examples of industry, learning, piety, and patriotism.

But, without an establishment provided by the state, the greater part will scarcely have any religion at all, wickedness will be practised on the boldest scale; and if the form of government have a

large portion of liberty in its texture, the manners will be egregiously dissolute. Democracy indeed, pure and unqualified, is the system which will harmonize the most easily with a polity altogether abstracted from religion; and this very consideration affords, perhaps, no inconsiderable argument against that species of government. But even if the government were, in other respects, the soundest and the wisest effort of human sagacity, it will probably prove only a curse to its citizens, unless some legal provision be made for religion. God himself, there is the highest reason to conclude, WILL SET HIS FACE AGAINST IT, and confound it. Nations, whose government has been seasoned with religious institutions, can scarce conceive to what lengths of villany and flagitiousness, such an atheistic institution will lead its subjects; and all Europe will not be at a loss where to look for an instance of its effects.

Without entering minutely into the circumstances of Pagan nations, let us take it for granted, that there are certain fundamental articles of revealed religion, a few of immense importance, which the legislator ought carefully to select from a number of subordinate truths and circumstantialia. These last he may safely leave to the consciences of men, by providing a toleration in which they may securely range. But the essentials of religion it is his duty to support, and not permit them to be derided and insulted by the profane attacks either of ignorant or of learned enemies of religion. To neglect them, would obviously be a far greater crime in him, than in those who have not had his advantages of information. Is it still said, Who shall decide what these fundamentals are! If men would seriously weigh the doctrines of the Scriptures, with a humble spirit, and in the use of prayer, they would probably be surprised to find how very small would be their differences of opinion. And one thing, which I propose to show in the course of this history, is the agreement of persons of this description in all ages; for in regard to fundamentals, it is certainly much closer and more uniform than many believe. No man ought to plead conscience for the neglect of that duty on which his salvation must depend. It is certain that these essentials cannot be neglected or despised without a turpitude of heart, which the Scripture connects with the final ruin of the soul.

The difficulty of providing a government equitably adapted to all consciences, if pushed into the extreme, supposes that there is no certain criterion of divine truth, and that men may, without moral guilt, believe any thing or nothing. But as these positions are inadmissible with all but Sceptics, and persons altogether profane, the connexion between sentiment and practice is too important, to justify the neglect of all religion in political establishments, for the sake of pleasing the worst part of the human species. If, after all, a government established on such principles bear hard on dissolute men, there seems no remedy; guilt must have its inconveniences. And there are no common principles on which a believer of revealed religion and an infidel can unite in the formation of a government.

The practical inferences are obvious: The subjects of a Christian government will consist of three classes. The friends of the establishment, who will, of course, support it; Dissenters, who, owning its religious fundamentals, differ in some subordinate sentiments; and those Dissenters, who are hostile to all religion, or, at least, are fond of a religion subversive of the great truths of Christianity. The members of the establishment, at the same time that they support its institutions with firmness, ought to exercise forbearance and charity towards the first class of Dissenters, and to think no worse of any man for differing in opinion from himself, where it is evident that he acts with uprightness. They owe charity also to the second class of Dissenters, but charity of a very different kind. The first class of Dissenters, convinced of the importance and utility of religious establishments, ought to support that, of whose friendly protection they daily feel the benefit in society, while they enjoy the privilege of toleration; and to view themselves as coalescing with the churchmen, who, like them, hold what is fundamentally Christian, rather than with those Dissenters who oppose Christianity itself. To persons of this last character I can give no political advice, till they learn antecedently, to receive the religion of Jesus itself, because till then, I can apply no principles to their consciences, which they will admit.

The happy government, under which we live, has, for many years past, exhibited to the world a fine example of an ec-

clesiastical establishment, framed and modelled according to the principles inculcated in this Chapter. The great truths of religion are supported by laws; and the same laws provide effectual restraints against propagators of false doctrine. Notwithstanding the vice, heresy, and profaneness, which prevail among us, we do not so much stand in need of new laws, as of zealous magistrates to enforce those which already exist.

It is sometimes said, that subscription to articles, and other tests of religious opinions, are injurious to the morals of men, by inducing them to act the part of hypocrites for the sake of worldly advantage. Supposing this to happen in some instances, nevertheless the answer is, this inconvenience is to be hazarded, because unavoidable, if we aim at promoting the general good. It is expedient that there should be a public liturgy, and proper persons to read the same, and to teach the true doctrines of Christ; and it is very necessary, that these persons should be known to approve the forms of worship according to which they officiate, and to believe the doctrines which they are bound to inculcate. If some persons will hypocritically profess themselves believers of what in their hearts they think contrary to truth, the guilt of such persons will lie at their own door in this case exactly as in all others, where men act insincerely for the sake of gain or convenience. The true state of this question is, whether an ecclesiastical establishment wisely constructed, has not in its nature a tendency to propagate the influence of Christianity, that is, to make its doctrines known, and sincerely believed, and its precepts diligently practised among all ranks of people; and not, whether a sacred institution of this kind is capable of being, now and then, abused and perverted, or of becoming a snare and temptation to an unfair mind.

I shall conclude this subject with briefly taking notice of an objection, which, on its first proposal, is apt to startle the best wishers to religion, and the warmest advocates of ecclesiastical establishments. Suppose the civil magistrates should happen to have formed an erroneous judgment concerning the true religion; will he not in that case, according to our own principle of general expediency, be justified in establishing a false one? I scruple not to give a decisive negative to this question, so far as it concerns those who

have had an opportunity of understanding and receiving the revealed will of God. For, the situation of such countries as have never heard of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, I do not here consider. The evidences of the truth of Christianity are so full and so clear, that, as we have repeatedly said, they cannot be rejected without great wickedness of heart. Nothing therefore can justify the civil magistrate in establishing a false religion. Shall we restrain and punish by positive laws the individual who propagates atheism or infidelity, and at the same time shall we approve the conduct of the magistrate, who erects and supports a national establishment of false religion, and who, by his institutions, prolongs and extends the mischief, much more than any individual, unarm'd with the authority of laws, could possibly do? Such a magistrate may indeed plead his sincerity and scruples of conscience; but we have the authority of the word of God for ascribing his unbelief to gross negligence, or willful blindness. There is then no difficulty in this head: governors of states, if they support a false religion, have reason to expect the heavy judgments of God. Let them consider the history of Jeroboam and of his successors in the kingdom of Israel. They all SINNED, AND THEY ARE MADE ISRAEL TO SIN, IN PROVOKING THE LORD GOD OF ISRAEL TO ANGER WITH THEIR VANTRIES, that is, with their establishment of false religion: * UNTIL THE LORD REMOVED ISRAEL OUT OF HIS RIGHT.†

A real difficulty, however, respecting the continuance of the subject may occur, whenever it pleases God, for the punishment of the sins of a nation, to permit a false religion to be established and supported by the ruling powers.

It may then be asked, whether a true believer of Christianity ought not to oppose the religious institutions of the country in which he lives, and to propagate his own opinions? or whether he is to submit to the civil magistrate, "to bow down himself in the house of Rimmon," and to surrender that faith upon which he depends for eternal salvation?

The general solution of these questions must be derived from a due consideration of the meaning of that apostolical maxim, "We ought to obey God rather than

men."* If, therefore, through the corruption of human nature, the state will not establish true Christianity, but a false religion, I know no way to be pursued, but that of the Apostle's, namely, for believers to propagate and to practise divine truth, and to suffer patiently for the truth's sake, according to the will of God. For, on the one hand, I find nothing in Scripture to justify Christians in resisting their governors by force, or in compelling them to make new ordinances; and, on the other hand, to comply with Anti-Christian institutions, would be to "sin a great sin," as Jeroboam's subjects did.† The middle line of conduct is pointed out by our Saviour in that sentence, "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another."‡

Several valuable miscellaneous articles must now be attended to, before we dismiss the fourth century.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE PRIVATE LIFE AND THE WORKS OF AMBROSE.

If we had the real life of this bishop written by Paulinus of Nola, we might make a profitable use of it. But that, which goes under Ambrose's name,§ is so stuffed with fables, that I scarcely know how to quote it. Ambrose died, A. D. 397. Ambrose died about the year 397, admired, regretted, and lamented by the whole Christian world. His life not improbably had been shortened by the incessant activity of his mind, and by the multiplicity of his employments; for he was only fifty-seven years old, and had been appointed bishop of Milan at the age of thirty-four.

His spirit was remarkably kind and sympathetic; his benevolence was extended to all, but especially those of the household of faith. His estate, real and personal, he bestowed on the poor, and for the support of the church, styling the poor his stewards and treasurers.¶ His labours were immense; he administered the eucharist daily, and preached commonly on the Lord's day, frequently on extraordinary occasions, and spent much

* Acts, v. 29.

† 2 Kings, xvii. 21.

‡ Matt. x. 23.

§ It is prefixed to the works of Ambrose.

¶ Orat. in Aux.

* 1 Kings, xvi. 13. † 2 Kings, xvii. 23.

time in teaching catechumens. His temper was heroic and strong; and no dignity or authority could shelter offenders from his episcopal rebukes, where he deemed it his duty to reprehend. Augustine tells us, that he found it, in a manner, impossible to have access to him, because of the multiplicity of his employments. The time he could spare from pastoral and charitable engagements was devoted to study and meditation.

The moral writings of Ambrose contain various things of solid utility; his *Treatise on Offices* shines among these. It was evidently his wish to imitate Tully, and to show the superiority of Christian over philosophical morals. A noble design, but, considered as a whole, feebly executed, because conducted without a plan. He modestly owns indeed, that he was called to teach, before he himself had learned. But he might have both preached and written better, had he always attended to the simple word of God, and exercised his own natural good sense in humble dependence on DIVINE GRACE, and paid less regard to the fanciful writings of Origen, which corrupted his understanding exceedingly. Less of this, however, appears in his moral than in his theological pieces.

In his usual manner, which is sententious, and full of quick turns, he discourses strikingly of the excellent use of taciturnity, and the difficulty of acquiring it. "Most men speak, when they do not know how to be silent. Seldom do you see any one silent, when to speak is of no profit. He is wise who knows when to hold his peace.—Must we then be dumb? No; for there is a time to speak, and a time to be silent. And if we must give an account of every idle word, take care lest you have to answer also for idle silence. Tie your tongue, lest it be wanton and luxuriant: keep it within the banks; a rapidly flowing river soon collects mud."*

His ideas of decorum in behaviour and carriage he illustrates by the account of two persons of his own diocese. The first was a friend of his own, who by sedulous offices recommended himself to Ambrose, in order to be admitted as a clergyman into his bishopric. The only reason why Ambrose refused, was because his gestures were light and indecent. The other he found already a cler-

gyman, and made this sole exception, namely, of indecent levity, to his conduct. His judgment was verified in both. The former, during the Arian persecution at Milan, deserted the faith; the latter, through the love of gain, denied himself to be a priest of Ambrose's diocese, to avoid judicial penalties.

His directions to his clergy would deserve to be made a part of an episcopal charge in every age of the Church. "It becomes," says he, "the prudence and gravity of clergymen, to avoid the public banquets frequently made for strangers: you may exercise hospitality to them at your own houses, and by this caution there will be no room for reproach. Entertainments of this sort take up much time, and also evidence a fondness for feasting. Secular and voluptuous discourse is apt to creep in; to shut your ears is impossible; to forbid, will be looked on as imperious. Why do you not employ the time which is free from clerical employments in reading? Why do you not revisit Christ, speak to Christ, hear Christ? We speak to him, when we pray; we hear him, when we read the divine oracles. What have we to do with other men's houses? Let them rather come to us, who want us. What have we to do with idle chit-chat? We received the ministry to attend on the service of Christ, not to pay court to men."*

In his book of Repentance, he remonstrates with great justice against the inexorable spirit of the Novatians, in refusing to re-admit penitents into the church. "Learn of me," says Christ, "for I am meek and lowly in heart." "I am unmerciful," says the Novatian.† In the same chapter, he bears testimony to the immaculate conception of Jesus, and to the native depravity of mankind. "He was not like the rest of us, born in the ordinary way of generation, but born from the Holy Ghost, and he received from the virgin a spotless body, with no taint of sin. For we are all born in sin, as David witnesses; I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin did my mother conceive me." I only remind the reader here of the preservation of two important truths in the Church during the days of Ambrose.

Hear how humbly and evangelically he speaks of himself.‡ "How shall I

* C. 2 & 3. B. i. de Officiis.

* B. i. de Officiis, 20. † B. i. c. 2.

‡ B. ii. de Penitentia, c. 8.

hear thee say to me, He has loved much, and is forgiven much! I confess my debts were greater than those of the penitent woman, and more was forgiven me, who was called into the ministry from the noise of the forum, and the terror of judicial administration. Yet, if we cannot equal her, the Lord Jesus knows how to support the weak, and to bring with himself the fountain of living water. He came to the grave himself. Oh, that thou wouldest come to this my sepulchre of corruption, Lord Jesus, and wash me with thy tears! If thou weep for me, I shall be saved. Thou shalt call me from the grave of this body, and say, come forth, that my thoughts may go forth to Christ and call forth thy servant. Though bound with the chains of my sins, I am entangled hand and foot, and buried in dead works; on thy call I shall come forth free, and be found one of those who sit at thy table. It shall be said, behold a man taken from the midst of secular vanity, remains in the priesthood not by his own strength, but by the grace of Christ. Preserve, Lord, thy own gift. I know myself unworthy of the episcopal office, because I had given myself to this world, but, by thy grace, I am what I am. The least of all bishops: yet because I have undertaken some labour for thy Church, preserve this fruit, lest whom thou callest to the ministry, when lost, thou shouldest suffer to perish in that ministry: And particularly, granting me the spirit of sympathizing with sinners; that I may not proudly elude, but mourn and weep; that while I deplore another, I may mourn over myself, saying, Tamar is more righteous than I.* Perhaps a young person may have sinned, deceived and hurried on into folly; we old persons sin also. The law of the flesh rebels against the law of our mind, even in us, whose duty it is to teach. Tamar is more righteous than I. We blame the avarice of another; let us remember whether our conduct has been stained with the same vice, which secretly dwells in our corrupt nature, and let each say, Tamar is more righteous than I. The same may be said with respect to the vice of anger. This is the way to avoid the severity of that just rebuke of our Lord concerning the mote and the beam.——He who rejoices in another's fall, rejoices in the devil's victory. Let us rather grieve, when we hear

that a man perishes for whom Christ died. Let us repent, and hope for pardon by faith, not as an act of justice: God wants not our money, but our faith."

Should any, who calls himself a minister of Christ, however dignified, distinguished, or denominated, read these lines of Ambrose, and catch a little of the tenderness, humility, and charity, which they breathe, and conceive more highly and more reverently of his office than he did before, and be stirred up to a measure of the same spirit, I shall rejoice that I have not laid them before the reader in vain. In truth, the ideas of the pastoral office were in Ambrose exceedingly serious, meek, lowly, and devotional. Have we not, too generally, great occasion to be humbled, on comparing ourselves with this holy servant of God.

That good men, who see and feel the evil of the world, should be tempted to seek for solitude and retirement, is so natural, that one does not wonder at the growth of the monastic spirit. The true security against it would have been, to have attended more closely to the scriptural rules of secular conduct given to Christians, and to have exercised more faith in those divine promises, which engage to preserve the soul in the midst of the world. Such an attention and exercise would have led Christians into a far nobler method of serving God, and letting their light shine before men, than that self-devised one, which many took, of retiring altogether from society. Ambrose, I have already observed, unhappily contributed much to the growth of this monastic taste; yet the following quotation shows, how serious and upright were his views, and how deeply conscious he was of the difficulties of the Christian life. "I wish a cautious and earnest affection for the things of God were as easy to be attained, as it is easy to speak of it. But the enticement of earthly lusts frequently creeps in, and the diffusion of vanity fills the mind. To avoid these snares is difficult, to be divested of them impossible. In fine, that the thing is rather matter of desire than effect, the prophet confesses, in saying, 'Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.' Our heart is not in our own power; our thoughts by sudden incursions confound the mind, and draw it a different way from what we have determined. Who so happy as always to mount upwards in his heart! How can this be done without divine aid!

* Gen. xxxviii.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee."^{*}

He who feels so strongly the power of that sin which dwelleth in us,[†] needs the light of grace to conduct him. Nor was it wanting in Ambrose. In that age of declension, not of apostasy from the faith, the candlestick of Milan was possessed of as clear and steady a light, under the ministration of her angel,[‡] as any at that time in the Christian world. Hear his summary view of the Gospel salvation: "God therefore assumed flesh, that he might abolish the curse of sinful flesh, and was made a curse for us, that the blessing might swallow up the curse; and that righteousness, pardon, and life, might swallow up our sin, our condemnation, and our death. For he underwent death, that the sentence might be fulfilled. — Nothing is done in the Gospel against the sentence of God, since the condition of the divine sentence has been fulfilled.

—We are dead with Christ: why then do we seek any more the acts of this life? For we carry about us the death of Christ, that the life of Christ may also be manifested in us. We live therefore now, not our own life, but the life of Christ, of all virtues. We are risen with Christ, let us live in him, let us rise in him, that the serpent may not be able to find in earthly things our heel, which he may wound." The reader, who is well versed in St. Paul's epistles, will see how the spirit of them was understood by Ambrose.

The palm of heavenly-mindedness, in which the primitive Christians so much excelled, was still in the possession of many in the fourth century. The last chapter of Ambrose, on the benefit of death, is remarkable in this light. Take notice of a few sentences.

"We shall go to those who sit down in the kingdom of God with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because, being asked to the supper, they made no excuse. We shall go, where there is a paradise of pleasure; where the wretched being, who fell among thieves, no longer weeps over his wounds, where the thief himself rejoices in the participation of the heavenly kingdom, where there shall be no more storms or vicissitudes, but the glory of

God alone shall shine. We shall go where Jesus has prepared mansions for his servants, that where he is, there we may be also. — The will of Christ is the same as performance. That we may know his true will, he hath said, Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory. We follow thee, Lord Jesus, but draw us that we may follow; no one rises without thee; open to us thy good, which David desired to see, when he said, I believe verily to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Show us that good, which in its nature is unchangeable, and which, when we arrive at heaven, we shall never cease to acknowledge and approve. There thy saints are freed from errors and anxieties, from folly and ignorance, from fear and terror, from all lusts and carnal affections. Let us seek him, and embrace his feet, and worship him, that he may say to us, fear not, I am the remission of sins, I am the light, I am the life: he that cometh to me shall not see death: — because he is the fulness of divinity."

In his three books concerning the Holy Ghost, he proves his Deity, partly by express testimony, such as, God is a spirit,^{*} the Lord is that spirit; but chiefly by showing that whatever is said of the divine properties and acts of the Father and of the Son, is said also of the Holy Ghost.

In comforting Faustinus, who mourned for the death of a sister, he says, "If it be said to the soul, thy strength shall be renewed, like the eagle; why? should we grieve? why should we groan for the dead, when the reconciliation of the world with God the Father is made by Jesus Christ? As we hold the benefits of Christ before all men, and before you, we are ambassadors for Christ, that you should know his gifts to be without repentance; that you may believe as you have always done, nor bring your faith into doubt by excess of sorrow, because Jesus was made sin for us, that he might take away the sin of the world, and we might be made the righteousness of God in him."[†]

In another epistle he gives an excellent view of spiritual illumination, and of

^{*} Ps. 84. Ambrose de Fuga seculi, C. i.

[†] Rom. vii. 17.

[‡] Rev. i. 20; "the angels of the seven churches."

^{*} John iv. 24. It is remarkable what he observes of the fraud committed by the Arians on the sacred volume at Milan, in the time of his predecessor Auxentius, namely, that they erased this text out of St. John's Gospel.

[†] Psalm ciii. 5.

[‡] Epia. 8. B. ii.

Christ dwelling in the heart :* of which suffice it to say, that he has the same views and sensations as holy men have confessed in all times and circumstances.

An epistolary address to clergymen deserves to be read by persons of this order in all ages. "It is," says he, "a common temptation to the human mind, that persons meeting with some slight offence in the path of duty, are inclined to depart from it. In a clergyman such conduct is particularly lamentable. Satan labours by this method, if he can by no other, to offend them. What advantage is it to me to remain in the pastoral office, to be laboriously employed and ill-treated, as if I had no other way of getting my bread? What! are worldly ends the governing motive, and do you not mean to lay up in store for the world to come?—Say not of thy God, he is a hard master; say not of thy office, it is unprofitable. The devil envies thy hope. Depart not from the Lord's inheritance, that he may at length bid thee enter into his joy. Farewell, my sons, and serve the Lord; for he is a good Master."

His expositions of Scripture are liable to great exceptions in point of accuracy, perspicuity, and order. The fancies of Origenism seduced him continually into vague and arbitrary interpretations. Yet is he true to the fundamentals of divine truth, and a rich question of godliness will at all times afford to the reader that edification which is in vain to be expected from cold, but more faultless comments. The doctrine of predestination and election he evidently misunderstands; this part of divine truth had indeed scarcely come the light since the days of Justin Martyr. On justification, he is more explicit, and sometimes uses the term in its proper forensic sense. The fathers, in these times, commonly confounded it with *merit*, though, in substance, they held the true doctrine concerning it. Ambrose is perhaps more clear of mistake, in this respect, than most of them.

Yet he appears to have given into the same sort of superstitious concerning the dead, which I remarked in the historian Salustius Severus; nor is it to be denied, that he helped forward the growth of monastic bondage and prelatical pride, by giving occasion to others, who followed, to make use of his well-meant positions,

for the furtherance of their own wicked designs. The same thing must, however, be said of his works, as those of many of the fathers, that great injustice is done to his memory by frauds and interpolations. In the dark times, every error and absurdity seems to have come forth with the pretended patronage of some of the renowned doctors of antiquity. In one or two instances alone, works have been ascribed to him, which in clearness of doctrine and excellence of composition, exceed the magnitude of his abilities, and I shall therefore defer the consideration of them at present.

But the lover of godliness will be disposed to forget his errors and superstitions, faults of the times rather than of his disposition, and will remember only the fervent, the humble, the laborious, and the charitable bishop of Milan.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL AMONG BARBARIANS; THE PROGRESS OF NOVATIANISM, AND OF MONASTICISM.

I HAVE but little to say on each of these articles, partly, because materials are scanty, and partly because where they are more plentiful, they are uninteresting. Let us, however, collect from them, if we can, an enlivening ray or two of the Church of Christ.

The Saracens, the descendants of Ishmael, afterwards so ennobled, or rather disgraced, by Mahomet the impostor, were at war with the Romans, under the conduct of their queen Moavia, who was a Christian. The emperor Valens made peace with her, one of the conditions of which was, that Moses a monk, who lived in the desert between Egypt and Palestine, should be appointed bishop of her nation. Valens ordered him to be carried to Alexandria, there to be ordained by Lucius. Moses, who knew the Arian character of the Metropolitan, said before him and the magistrates, and all the people, Stay, I am not worthy to be called a bishop; but if I am called to this office, unworthy as I am, for the good of souls, I take the Creator of all things to witness, that I will not receive the imposition of your hands, which are defiled with the blood of so many holy men. If you knew not my faith, replied Lucius, learn it from my mouth, and judge not by

* Epis. II. B. III.

reports. Moses, however, was aware of the Arian subtleties, and chose to stand by the evidence of works. I know your faith, said he; the pastors exiled among infidels, condemned to the mines, thrown to the wild beasts, or destroyed by fire, testify your creed; the eyes speak more strongly than the ears.*

Political necessities sometimes restrain the passions of wicked men. Lucius was obliged to dissemble his resentment on account of the situation of Valens his master, and permit Moses to receive ordination from the exiled bishops. His labours among the Saracens were crowned with success. The nation before his time was chiefly idolatrous; that his work was blessed among them appears from hence, that he kept them in peace with the Romans. But this is all the account we have of the fruits.

The Goths had long harassed the Roman empire with their incursions; but their depredations were made subservient to the progress of the Gospel. I have observed under the last century, that some captive bishops laboured among them with good success. And the work was of an abiding nature. Ulfilas, who is called the Apostle of the Goths, was descended from some of these. He, coming ambassador to Constantine, was ordained first bishop of the Christian Goths by Eusebius of Nicomedia. I have shown from a passage in Theodoret, that the Arians seem to have imposed upon him by an ambiguity of terms, in consequence of which he drew over his Goths to communicate with that sect. Certain it is, that this people held the Nicene faith for a considerable time, if we may credit Augustine. In the time of Valens, many of them suffered death from an idolatrous persecuting prince of their own. Ulfilas coming from his countrymen on an embassy to Valens, that he might induce him to allow them a settlement in Thrace, was on that occasion brought over to communicate with the Arians. That he was a man of superior genius and endowments, is certain. He civilized and polished this barbarous people, and first introduced the use of letters among them, and translated the Scriptures into their tongue for their use, omitting the books of the Kings, because he thought it might encourage the ferociousness of the Goths, who were already too warlike. A copy

of his version of the four Gospels is still extant, a monument of the ancient Teutonic language. It is with regret I leave the account of this great man so imperfect, whose labours and success seem to show, that the hand of the Lord must have been with him. But, however innocent he and his contemporaries might be of the Arian heresy, the effect of their communication with the party was what might be foreseen. The whole church of the Goths, by degrees at least, came into Arianism, and the consequences will meet us in the course of this history.*

Heresies multiplied in this century, chiefly through the various ramifications of Arianism, which have been explained with more than sufficient accuracy by many writers. Of the dissenters, the Meletians continued throughout the century. The Donatists still remained in all their ferocity; of whom it will be more convenient to speak hereafter. The Novatians have found in the candid Socrates, a historian who gives us some authentic information, having himself been acquainted with the son of one of their presbyters. In Phrygia and Paphlagonia, their church was in a flourishing state to his day. The general church, though surely right in its principle of opposition to the particular point of Novatian inflexibility, yet afterward abused the licence of re-admission into the church granted to offenders; and as discipline relaxed in various places, all kinds of crimes abounded.—The people of Phrygia and Pamphylia, being habitually an abstemious people, averse to pleasures, and to the indulgence of sensuality, were on that account the more disposed to admit the severities of Novatianism.† In this century, a part of them separated themselves still farther from the general church, by appointing in a synod, that Easter should be observed at the same time that the Jews kept the feast of unleavened bread. But as Agellius the Novatian bishop of Constantinople, and other more celebrated bishops of their denomination, were not present, a schism was formed, from this circumstance, among them. Agellius presided forty years over their church at Constantinople, and died in the sixth year of Theodosius. When he was near his end, he ordained Sisinnius to be his successor, a presbyter of the church,‡ of

* Sozom. B. VI. c. 38.

* Excerpt. Philostorgii apud Photium.

† Soc. B. IV. c. 28.

‡ Soc. B. V. c. 21.

great learning, who had been instructed by Maximus, the famous friend of Julian. The flock of Agellus murmured, because he had not ordained Marcian, a man of eminent piety, by whose means they had weathered, in safety, the persecution of Valens. The aged bishop, willing to pacify them, ordained Marcian, and directed that he should be his immediate successor, and that Sisinnius should be the next bishop to Marcian.

Thus slender and scanty are the accounts left us of a bishop, who for so many years presided over a great flock in turbulent and trying times. On Marcian's accession, one Sabbatius, a Jew, receiving Christianity, was advanced by him to the office of presbyter, and in his heart panted after a bishopric. This man undertook to defend the innovation concerning Easter, which has been mentioned; and first, under pretence of greater strictness of life, he withdrew himself from the church, declaring that he could not conscientiously communicate with some members of the congregation.

In time, however, his views were laid open, as he attempted to hold separate assemblies. Marcian then found his error in ordaining so ambitious a person, and often said in his grief, that he wished he had laid hands on thorns rather than on Sabbatius. He took measures, however, to disappoint his ambition. Calling a council, he sent for Sabbatius, and desired him to lay open the reasons of his dissent. The man informed them, that the difference of opinion concerning Easter was his grievance, as he thought that festivity ought to be observed according to the rule of the synod of Pasa. The bishops, suspending his designs, obliged him to swear, that he would not attempt to become a bishop, and then decreed, that the time of observing Easter should be left indifferent, and that no schism should be made in the church on that account. Their design of preserving unity was laudable; but it succeeded not. Sabbatius drew over a number of the simpler sort, and particularly those of Phrygia and Galatia, to his own Jewish mode, and got himself appointed bishop of his followers, in contradiction to his oath. The consequence was, a variety of divisions among the Novatians, concerning the time of Easter, and other frivolous subjects, and the crumbling of this church into contentious parties of different kinds.

Little can be said on this subject, but what must occur to the mind of a thinking reader. This most respectable of all the dissenting churches seems to have preserved, for a considerable time, a strictness and purity of discipline and manners; but its essential characteristic of narrow bigotry, in things of no moment, gave occasion to internal divisions among its own members, which, fomented by unprincipled persons, must have perverted them much from the simplicity of the Gospel.

Monasticism continued to make a rapid progress through this whole century. It is not worth while to trace its progress particularly, nor to recite any of the ridiculous frauds, abuses and superstitions, which are connected with it. Self-righteous formality made rapid strides in the Christian world; one single observation, however, of an author, who has recorded much of this trash with great complacency, will deserve to be transcribed. "Most of these famous monks," says Sozomen, "lived to extreme old age; and I think that this was a mean of facilitating the progress of Christianity. Antioch excepted, Syria was very late in receiving the Gospel, and these monks were highly instrumental in the work, both in that country, and among the Persians, and Saracens." That these countries, which were before, for the most part, void of the doctrine of Christ, might receive spiritual advantage from these superstitious men, is probable, because some genuine piety was doubtless among them. That Galatia and Cappadocia, which had long before been full of the best Christians, should do so, I very much doubt.* Superstition, drawing with it something of real Christianity, may bring a blessing to countries altogether profane or idolatrous;—to a people already well evangelized, it can only act as a poison.

CHAPTER XX.

CHRISTIAN AUTHORS IN THIS CENTURY.

THERE were several persons of the name of Marcius, who lived much about the same time. Hence it is as difficult as it would be uninteresting to

* Sozomen, B. VI. c. 24.

Macarius. determine to which of them the fifty homilies yet extant belong. Their antiquity is doubtless great, and they give no small specimen of the divinity of the times. These are a few of the favourite thoughts of Macarius:

"Though a man be improved in virtue, he ought to look on himself as one who has done nothing, and should press forward to greater degrees, lest he lose the Holy Spirit by pride or sloth.—Man is capable of falling from that state of holiness in which he is, unless he preserve himself in it by humility, which is the infallible mark of a Christian.—Those who have not yet received grace, ought to do good and forsake evil by natural motives; but those who have received it, being possessed of love, need not such motives."—He thinks, that men may fall away after the highest attainments, and that it is impossible for any to be certain of his salvation in this life. He observes, that to grow in grace without humility is impossible; that the soul after death goes immediately to that place, on which its love was fixed in this life; that whatever good a man does by natural strength, can never save him without the grace of Jesus Christ; that if the Holy Spirit does not produce in us the love of God, we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. He is fond of showing, that we ought always so to labour, as if all depended on our own endeavours, and yet to acknowledge that we can do nothing without God.*

Certainly a serious and humble spirit runs through these homilies, and they seem to have been written by a man earnestly engaged in the divine life, and sensible of the need of divine grace. With such dim kind of light many humble souls, in the dark ages, groped in their way safe to the heavenly kingdom, though, like Macarius, poorly furnished with evangelical views and doctrines. These men saw and felt, however, the necessity of conversion, and the importance of a principle of divine love; and hence their obscure light deserves to be called mid-day, compared with the darkness of those, who put mere natural light in the room of the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and mere moral virtue in the room of divine charity.

Victorinus of Africa had professed rhetoric many years at Rome, and was held

in such high reputation, that a public statue was erected to his honour in the city. In his old age, however, he was converted, and was not ashamed to confess the faith of Christ in public. An animated and instructive account of this is given by Augustine in his *Confessions*, which may meet us hereafter. At present, we are to view him as an author. He wrote against the Arians and the Manichees. In his treatise against the latter, he addresses his friend Justinus, who had been deceived by them, in this manner: "In vain do you macerate yourself with excessive mortifications; for after you have worn away yourself by your austerities, your flesh will return to the devil in darkness. I advise you to acknowledge, that God Almighty created you, that you may be truly the temple of God, according to the words of the Apostle, 'you are the temple of God, and his Spirit dwelleth in you.' If you have not the honour to be the temple of God, and to receive the Holy Spirit in you, Jesus Christ is come, not to save, but to destroy you."*

The spirit of godliness, unquestionably, possessed this man; but his writings are, at present at least, very little interesting, though the passage I have quoted shows his holy taste. It were to be wished, that instead of subtilizing intricate controversies, he had favoured posterity with a plain view of the Lord's dealings with his own soul, which must, in a conversion so extraordinary as his, have been very instructive, and for the execution of which he must have been far more competent than for the invention or description of theological theories. But the humour of philosophical refinement guided far too much the best writers of these times, even such as Victorinus, who, being converted in his old age, was probably, never well qualified to expound the Scriptures. If the reader regret how little of experimental divinity is laid before him, I join with his complaint: but my materials suffer me not to apply a remedy.

Pacianus, bishop of Barcelona in Spain, was a man renowned both for piety and eloquence. Like most of this age, he exalts too much the forms of the church, and the dignity of the priesthood. Yet a strain of holy fervour seems to pervade his writings,

* Du Pin, Cent. IV. Macarii.

* Du Pin, Cent. IV. Victorinus.

and he combats the peculiar error of inflexible severity in the Novatians with just argument and charitable sentiments. "If man be subject to these miseries (of sinning away his privileges) let us no more accuse the mercy of God, who has proposed these remedies to our diseases; let us no more efface the titles of God's clemency by an insupportable rigour, nor harder sinners, by an inflexible hardness, from enjoying in those gifts which God has bestowed upon them."

This is doubtless right; but when he excludes the Novatians from any part in the blessings of the church, because of their schism, he doubtless falls into uncharitable bigotry, in which both churchmen and dissenters too much abounded; though, I apprehend, in obscure regions this evil more prevailed. We have seen, in what Christian charity the general church and Novatians could live in the great city of Constantinople.

Optatus, bishop of Melevis in Numidia, deserves a place in these memoirs, on account of his judicious and able treatise

Optatus writes against the Donatists, A. D. 370. against the Donatists, A. D. 370.

The case of the Donatists I shall reserve to the time of Augustine, whose character and conduct are much connected with the history of those dissenters. Of course, I have little to say of Optatus's writings. A serious spirit appears in them; and a single passage, which is introduced, in the way of digression, contains matter so truly Christian, that the reader will think it worth our attention; as it demonstrates, that evangelical truth was far from being lost as yet amidst the thick mists of superstition, and that the true resting-place of the soul in the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ, the true humility, and real plan of sanctification were understood, in some degree at least, by this author. Rebuking the pride of the Donatists, who boasted themselves to be holy and innocent, he says, "Whence comes this sanctity of yours, which the Apostle St. John dared not attribute to himself, seeing he says, If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. He who speaks after this manner, WISELY REFERS HIMSELF TO THE MERCY

OF GOD; for a Christian may desire good, and endeavour to walk in the way of salvation; but he cannot be perfect of himself. For though he does run, yet there will always remain something to be done by God, to perfect him; and it is necessary that God should help a man in his weakness; for He is perfection, and there never was any but Jesus Christ the Son of God, who was perfect. All other men are imperfect. It belongs to us, to will and to run, but God only can give perfection. Jesus Christ has not given us perfect holiness, but has only promised it."

The Apollinarii, father and son, were of Laodicea; the father a presbyter, the son a reader in the Church. Both were skilled in Greek literature; the father taught grammar, the son rhetoric. Epiphanius, a sophist, was united with them in the closest intimacy. Theodotus, bishop of Laodicea, very properly fearing that the connexion with a Pagan might endanger their souls, advised them to give up his acquaintance. They despised the advice, and persisted. George, the successor of Theodotus, afterward attempting in vain the same thing, expelled them at length from Christian communion. Incensed at this, they set up a new sect, known by the name of the Apollinarian heresy, the principal mark of which is, that it ascertains precisely one point of the Arian creed, by denying to our Saviour a human soul, and supposing the inferior divine nature, which he had from the Father, to supply its place.†

These men were doubtless persons of superior capacity. The son, particularly, was one of the greatest men of his time, in learning, genius, and powers of argument. His answer to Porphyry is looked on as the best defence of Christianity against Paganism. He it was, who, in Julian's time, endeavoured to compensate to the Christian world the loss of the classical authors, from the study of whom they were debarred by the persecution of that emperor. He wrote poems and dialogues, in imitation of Sophocles and Plato, on scriptural subjects. His translation of the Psalms into Greek verse, which remains to this day, is highly commended.‡

• Du Pin, Cent. IV. Optatus.

† Socrates, B. II. c. 46.

‡ Du Pin.

• Du Pin, Cent. IV. Papias.

What was wanting in these men? Humility. There have been persons in later times, like them, of good moral character, learned, acute, industrious, far surpassing many real saints, in capacity, and in usefulness too, so far as the externals of religion are concerned. Pride and self-confidence lead such men to speculate, where they ought to adore; to dispute, where they ought to pray; and to blaspheme, where they ought to submit. They treat with scorn the charitable admonitions of their pastors and godly friends, because they know languages and sciences better than their reprovers. Strangers to themselves, and to the whole work of the Holy Spirit on the heart, and resisting all his godly motions, they cannot come to Christ, because they are unwilling to descend from their prodigious altitude into the valley of humiliation. Ambition in them must be fed; disappointed in the Church of Christ, they invent corrupt refinements, and seek to become heads of a party. He who knows that God taketh the wise in their craftiness, and revealeth himself to babes, will not stumble at such cases; and those few in all ages who stand superior to the rest of mankind in talents, and yet love genuine godliness, are only secured and hedged in by the Divine goodness, through a charitable course of discipline, often more severe than is needful for other Christians.

Didymus of Alexandria may be fairly matched with Apollinarius, in greatness of understanding and accomplishments.

Didymus. Though he lost his sight at the age of five years, he became so vigorous and successful a student, that he was renowned for his skill in philosophy, rhetoric and geometry. He filled the chair of the famous school of Alexandria with vast applause. Origenism was his favourite system, though, as far as appears, he continued always sound, and I hope, humble and holy, in Christian doctrine. His treatise on the Holy Spirit, of which only the Latin translation by Jerome has come down to us, is perhaps the best the Christian world ever saw on the subject. And whatever has been said, since that time, in defence of the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost, seems, in substance, to be found in that book.

Gregory Nyssen, brother of the famous Basil, was the bishop of Nyssa, a city of Cappadocia. Basil, and two of his bro-

thers, embraced a solitary life; but Gregory married, and lived in society. Under Valens, he was faithful, and had the honour to be expelled from his church. In the year 378, he was restored. He died toward the end of the century. In a catechetical discourse, he shows a sound judgment, in laying down different rules of argumentation with Pagans, Jews, and Heretics. To defend the incarnation of God, he shows that man is fallen, and corrupted, and can be recovered only by his Creator; and hence, that the Word who created him, came himself to raise him again. He shows also, that to be born of a virgin, to eat, to drink, to die, and to be buried, are not things unbecoming the holy nature of God, because there is no sin in them; and that the Divinity, united to man, lost not its perfections, any more than the soul loses its properties by its union with the body.

Once visiting Jerusalem, he was hospitably received by three religious ladies of note there, Eustathia, Ambrosia, and Basilissa, and contemplated with delight the scenes of our Lord's abode on earth. But he tells us, that he found there little of true religion, and returned sorrowful to Antioch, whence he wrote to the three ladies, and cautioned them against being imposed on by those, who desired to make a prey of them. Being asked by a friend, whether it was an essential part of religion to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he answered in the negative, and that a man had more reason to expect the Spirit of God in Cappadocia, where true piety prevailed, than at Jerusalem, where, it seems, religion was run to a very low ebb. Thus much for Gregory Nyssen, whose piety at least deserves our regard, though as an author, he is in no very high estimation.*

CHAPTER XXI.

EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN.

SOME other persons, who lived in this century, will, on several accounts, deserve a more distinct attention. I shall begin with Ephraim the Syrian, who was born at Nisibis in Mesopotamia, of Chris-

Gregory
Nyssen
banished
in

A. D. 374.

Restored
in 378.
Died in
379.

tian parents, and was educated with great care from his infancy. His turn of mind from childhood was devout, studious, and contemplative, to an extreme degree. And since few persons in that age knew how to unite the real Christian life with the practice of all the duties of society, it is not to be wondered at, that the solitary taste prevailed much in Ephraim. It is rather a proof of uncommon good sense or charity, or of both, that at length he could be induced to quit his solitude,* and live in the great city of Edessa, for the sake of enjoying the benefit of Christian assemblies, and of rendering himself useful to his fellow-creatures. He wrote much on the Scriptures, and composed various devotional pieces in the Syriac, his native tongue; which in his own lifetime were translated into Greek, and were much admired by all the eastern churches. He never was advanced further in the ecclesiastical state, than to the office of deacon, and once he took a very extraordinary method to avoid being preferred to the office of a bishop. He feigned madness; and escaped. The reader will recognize something similar in the conduct of Ambrose, and may take occasion to lament the unhappy extremes of opposite kinds, which, in different ages, have disfigured the Church. In Ephraim's days, the pastoral character appeared to good men awful beyond measure, requiring little less than angelical virtues. In our days, its hot conveyance and love of gain frequently the principal motive, and dissimilarity of character the principal qualification!

A noted heretic, named Harmonius, the son of Bardesanes, industriously employed himself in composing religious hymns for the use of the Syrians, in which he interpersed his father's heretical notions, and the philosophy of the Greeks. Ephraim, whose views of the fundamentals of Christian faith were strictly sound, and to whom the faith of the Gospel was precious, made himself master of the measures and tunes, and, in the use of them, composed Christian hymns, which were well received by the Syrians, and sung to the same tunes as those of Harmonius. He wrote also a discourse on the utility of psalmody, and exploded idle songs and dancing. Let this be regarded as a proof of his zeal and industry. Not long before his death, he

gave an instance of charity that deserves to be recorded. A severe famine raged in Edessa, and many indigent persons died for want. He waited some time, to see if any would step forth to relieve them;† but finding little appearance of this, the compassion of his heart at length broke through all the unhappy monastic restraints, by which, even in Edessa, he had precluded himself from doing much good to the Church; and going among the rich and wealthy, he vehemently re-proved their inhumanity. They did, what persons of the same character do in all ages; they cleared themselves of avarice, but excused themselves, on account of the difficulty of finding a proper person, whose discretion and fidelity might be trusted in the distribution of their alms. Do you think me competent to this office? replied Ephraim. All owned it without hesitation. "Then I will undertake it." Receiving their contributions, he caused three hundred beds to be brought into the public cloisters of the city, and the infirm to be placed on them, and he furnished them both with food and medicine. He took care also of strangers, and of those whom want had driven out of the country, and provided them all with necessary accommodations, till the dearth was abated.

How much is it to be regretted, that mistaken ideas of piety, into which young converts are very apt to fall, should have deprived the Christian world of so much benefit, as might have arisen from the talents and virtues of Ephraim! In this occasional sally, we see the outlines of a general infirmary, drawn and brought into practice by a monk! That men, who mix with the world continually, should be covetous and selfish, will surprise no man who knows human depravity. And what advantage did Satan gain, in these times, when the best and most excellent men hid themselves from the world, and as much as possible attended only to the cultivation of private virtues! A strong proof, this, of the low and reduced state of Christian knowledge. And as I know nothing more worth recording of the life of Ephraim, let us take a short view of his writings, in order to discover, if we can, the spirit of his religion. If I mistake not, we may see by a few quotations, which will serve instead of many in a case where the character is exceedingly un-

* Sozom. B. III. c. 16.

* Sozom. B. III. c. 16.

form, that his Christian love was much greater than his light, and that few men were better furnished and prepared for the very best use of evangelical consolation, if the theology of his time had afforded him easy access to it.

Speaking of love, he says, "Blessed is the man who possesses love, and with it departs to God; for He, knowing his own, will receive him into his bosom; he shall be a companion of angels, and reign with Christ. By love, God the Word came upon earth; by it, paradise has been opened to us, and an entrance has been shown to all into heaven. Being enemies to God, by love we were reconciled. We may justly say, that God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God."*

Hear him mourn over himself, and judge what a sense he had of natural depravity. "From my childhood I have been a vessel unprofitable and dishonourable. Warning others, I have fallen myself into their evils, twofold. Wo is me!—whence can there be any refuge, unless the mercies of God shine quickly upon me. Nor is there any hope of salvation from works: While I speak of purity, I am thinking of uncleanness: While I am uttering rules for the conquest of the passions, my own are inwardly raging night and day. What excuse can I make? Alas! what a scrutiny must I undergo! I have had the form without the power of godliness. I fear, lest fire from heaven should consume me, as it did the two sons of Aaron. Shall I then despair of salvation? By no means: this the adversary desires, in order to destroy me. I do not throw away myself; for I confide in the mercies of God, and your prayers for me.—I pray thee, cast me not away. Thou knowest the wounds of my soul; heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed.—What shame will seize me, when those, who now count me holy, shall see me condemned, and when all secrets shall be laid open!"†

However defective his views of evangelical doctrine were, his ideas of that humility, which enters into the essence of the experience of them, are just and deep. "Vain," says he, "is every endowment without humility. Pride labours to domineer over all, and lays a snare for every one in that way which is peculiar to each. The wise, the strong,

the beautiful, the ingenious, are each exposed to danger from that in which they excel. The Lord, knowing our danger, hath set humility as our guard, saying, 'When ye have done all, say we are unprofitable servants.' Do those who labour abundantly in the ministry glory over those of a more still and quiet turn; behold, the Lord commends Mary sitting at his feet, as having chosen the good portion. Are the sedate inclined to glory over the active; behold the Son of man came to minister.—To be lifted up, is to have a fleshly mind; and if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.—When thou canst bear grievous things, against thy will, yet willingly, know that thou hast made proficiency in humility.—Through pride, the Pharisee was condemned; through humility, the Publican was exalted; with whom may the Lord deign to rank us in his kingdom with all the just."*

Observe how divinely he exhorts, though his manner of speaking evinces his ignorance of the true distinction between moral and natural inability: "He might have healed all the wounds of our souls, and compelled us violently to goodness; but he does not choose that method, that our choice may have its praise. Do we neglect to call for his help, when he loves and pities us? Hath he redeemed and enlightened us? He hath given us to see and taste of his grace; that we might seek him without ceasing. Happy he, who hath tasted of his love, and prepared himself to be always filled with it. Filled with this love, he admits no other. Who would not love such a master, worship him, and confess his goodness?—From his immense height and the blessed bosom of the Father did he not descend to us? The Invisible became visible—O wonder, full of fear and trembling! A hand of clay, formed of the dust, smote the Creator of heaven and earth; and we, poor dust and ashes, cannot bear the contradiction of a word—What wilt thou say to Him in that day!"†

Speaking of the day of Judgment, he says, "An innumerable multitude, each raised from the dead, and clothed with his own body, exclaim, 'Glory to Him who hath raised us and gathered us together by his loving kindness.' Blessed is he who shall be counted worthy to see that hour, in which all that loved the immortal Bridegroom are taken up into the

* Ephraim's Works. Oxon.

† Id.

* Ephraim's Works.

† Id. 17.

clouds to meet him.—I remembered the day, and trembled, and, groaning, wept till I had no more power to weep.—My days have passed on, and my iniquities have been multiplied. Who is me, my beloved! What shall I do in the shame of that hour, when my friends, who now see and bless me in this garb of piety, may behold me full of iniquity within? O gracious Lover of souls! by thy compassions I compare thee, place me not at the left hand with the goats; but by thy kindness, I implore thee, give me a contrite spirit, and purify me, that I may be a temple of thy grace. Sinner as I am, I knock at thy door without ceasing; slothful though I be, yet I walk in thy way.”

Will the reader bear the devotion of this broken-hearted saint! * “I beseech thy goodness, heal my wounds, and enlighten my understanding, that I may see thy gracious disposition towards me. When my heart is infatuated, let the salt of thy grace season it.—Then alone knowest, how my soul thirsts after thee, as a dry land.—As thou hast ever heard me, neglect not now my petition: my mind is as a captive, yet seeking thee, the only true Saviour. Send thy grace, that I may eat and drink, and be satisfied.—Distill one drop of thy love, that it may burn as liquid fire in my soul, and consume its thorns, even evil lusts.” †

Were I to quote the very strong descriptions which he gives of his own sinfulness, persons unacquainted with the power of in-dwelling sin might suspect that this man, who was remarkably strict and circumspect in his manners from youth, must have been a man of gross wickedness. For similar reasons, St. Paul, on account of the strong description of his internal corruptions, in the seventh chapter to the Romans, has been thought to have been speaking only of his life before conversion, though he evidently speaks of himself at the time of writing. It was deep humility of soul, and a large acquaintance with the propensity of the natural heart itself, which led both of them to describe themselves as so very evil. The difference is, that Ephraim's inferior knowledge of gospel-grace, prevented his attainment of that strength and joy, in which the Apostle abounded. Yet his faith, clouded as the grounds of it were, was sound. “I knew that the multitude of his mercies exceeds

the multitude of my sins.—In baptism he hath given me remission of sins; yet I need to be healed of sins committed after baptism; but he who raised the dead is able to heal me also.” Is not this the very frame of an humbled soul, bowed down with in-dwelling corruption? “I desire to rise, but cannot; the weight of sin presses me down. I see, but I walk in much darkness. I move my hand, but I am as a paralytic.”

In his last will and testament, his humility appears mixed with superstition and dejection of spirit. A mind like his, truly sensible of sin, and not fully and steadily discerning the Lord Jesus, its only righteousness, will flee to vain refuges. Thus Ephraim has some recourse to prayers and offerings to be made for him after his decease. The value of clear Christian light hence appears inexpressible.*

His reverence towards the blessed God appears in a book which he wrote against those, who would pretend to search out the nature of the Son of God. In the second chapter† he says, “Unhappy, miserable, and most impudent is he, who desires to search out his Maker. Innumerable myriads of angels glorify with reverence, and trembling adore: while men of clay, full of sins, dispute without fear, concerning the Divinity. Their body trembles not, their mind is not disconcerted; but, secure and loquacious, they speak of Christ the Son of God, who suffered for me an unworthy sinner, and of his two-fold generation: nor do they feel how blind they are in the light.”

The remarks which might be made on this holy man have been anticipated, for the most part. Undoubtedly the best state of Christianity is that of a saint, humbled under a sense of sin all his days, yet rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and bringing forth fruit with charity and patience. This requires an evangelical knowledge, both of the Law and of the Gospel. And an experimental acquaintance with this science is generally very simple and strong, in both its parts, under the effusion of the Holy Spirit. On the decline of this, toward the latter end of the third century, a lower form of Christianity, even in real saints, obtained; and our history is still travelling through the twilight. The taste of this lower form

* A.C.

† M.S.

* T.C.

† See Dr. Owen's Preface to his *SCOTLAND* 10.

was to know the Law in its spirituality, but not the Gospel in its consolations.—Of this form was Ephraim, one of the most holy men in this period; and I scarcely have found a saint, who had better views, since the days of Cyprian, unless we except Ambrose of Milan. But by far the greater part of real good men, in this whole century, and in the latter part of the last, lived comparatively, in bondage, looking to Jesus, sincerely, though confusedly. One person, however, was training up under the special guidance of God, in the latter part of this century, whose superior light was appointed to illuminate the next, as we shall see by and by. But how does the piety, the humility, the conscientiousness of such men as Ephraim, with all

their abject superstition, rebuke the pride and carelessness and levity of many now evangelized in the head, and not in the heart, who trifle with the light, and live in sin, because they conceive grace to abound!

I shall dismiss this Saint, after I have taken a little notice of one of his companions named Abraham, whose life he has written, and whom he admires extremely. For fifty

Abraham
the Ascetic.

years he lived an Ascetic, in the strictest observation of monastic rules, and confined himself principally to his cell; though the intelligent reader will think he acted most like a Christian in those intervals, when he left it; in one of them particularly, to which alone I shall confine my attention. There was a great desert in the neighbourhood of the city (Edessa, I suppose) in which the inhabitants were all idolaters to a man;* and though many presbyters and deacons had been sent to them by the bishop of the city, yet they had all returned without effect, unable to bear the persecution of the Pagans. One day, the bishop observed among his clergy, that he knew of no person so devoted to God as Abraham, and therefore he would ordain him as an evangelist of these Pagans. At first he entreated him, but in vain; Abraham begged to be permitted to bemoan his own evils. The bishop, however, insisting on the obedience which he owed to authority, and observing how much better it was to be employed in the salvation of many, than

of one soul only, Abraham at length submitted. He began his work with fervent prayer for the divine blessing, and having erected a church, he supplicated in it, for the conversion of the people. His next step appears not so proper; he threw down the idols and altars of the Pagans; the consequence of which was, that, with much ill usage, he was expelled from the country. He returned, however, to the village, and resumed his work of prayer in the church, to the astonishment of the Pagans. When these came to him from time to time, he began to exhort them to turn from idols to the living God, on which he was worse treated than before. For three years, he bore their insults and a constant series of persecution. His patience, however, and meekness, were admirable, and at length the people began to be softened, and comparing his preaching with his practice, they concluded that God must be with him, and offered themselves voluntarily to receive his doctrine. The saint rejoicing at the event, desired them to give glory to God, who had enlightened the eyes of their hearts to know him. In fine, he gathered them into a church, daily opening to them the Scriptures. At length, when he saw them confirmed in the faith of the Gospel, and bringing forth the fruits of it with steadiness, he abruptly retired from them to his former solitude. The work, however, remained firm and strong, and the bishop visited and exhorted them from the word of God, and ordained pastors from among themselves.

How much better would Abraham have been thus employed during the fifty years of his solitude! But such were the times. While the world proceeded in its usual wickedness, those who were best calculated to reform it had a strong tendency to live a recluse life; and false fear and bondage kept many from the pastoral office, who might have been its brightest ornaments. The mischief of this was inexpressible; the extension of the Gospel was checked; and every circumstance showed, that the Spirit of God was no longer poured out, in his fulness, among men.

CHAPTER XXII.

HILARY OF POICTIERS.

AN account of the life of Hilary is delivered by a person, named Fortunatus—

who wrote about two hundred years after him. This biographer, according to the taste of the age, which was still more credulous and superstitious than that of Hilary, is extremely barren in matters which really deserve attention, and is full of prodigies and fictions. The best account of him therefore is to be drawn from his contemporaries, and the ecclesiastical historians, and above all from his own writings. Of his life and actions little is known, that deserves to be recorded: yet so great a man merits a distinct attention.

He was born at Poitiers in France, and being of a very noble family, and distinguished by a liberal education, he was enabled to throw a lustre on Christianity after he received it. In his book on the Trinity he gives us some account of his conversion.* He seriously considered the folly and vanity of idolatry, and was led to conclude, that its professors could not possibly be competent to lead men to happiness. He contemplated the visible frame of things, and inferred an Omnipotent Eternal Being, as their Maker and Preserver. He observes, that happiness consists not in any external things, nor in the bare knowledge of the first principles of good and evil, but in the knowledge of the true God. By reading the books of Moses and the Prophets, he found his mind enlightened, and his judgment confirmed in these ideas.† The short but comprehensive account of God, in the book of Exodus, "I am that I am," affected him with admiration. When he was carried forward to the New Testament, there he learnt, that there is an eternal Word, the Son of God made man, who came into the world to communicate to it the fulness of grace. His hope of happiness was now enlarged; "since the Son of God was made man, men may become the sons of God. A man, who with gladness receives this doctrine, renews his spirit by faith, and conceives a hope full of immortality. Having once learned to believe the Gospel, he rejects captious difficulties, and no longer judges after the maxims of the world. He now neither fears death, nor is weary of life, and presses forward to a blessed immortality." In such a manner does Hilary give us the history of his own mind in religion. And when he enters on the subject of the Trinity, he gives

an excellent admonition; humility at least will think so, though pride will object to it. It is, that the reader would think of God according to the light of faith, and agreeably to the testimony of God himself, divesting his mind of the meanness of human opinions. "For," continues he, "the chief qualification required in a reader is, that he be willing to take the sense of an Author from what he reads, and not give him one of his own. He ought not to endeavour to find, in the passages which he reads, that, which he presumed ought to be there. In such passages as describe the character of the Supreme Being particularly, he ought at least to be persuaded, that God knew himself.* And in another part of the same treatise, he makes this observation: "The blasphemies of the heretics oblige us to do those things which are forbidden us, to search into mysteries incomprehensible, to speak things ineffable, and to explain that which we are not permitted to examine. And instead of performing with a sincere faith that which is commanded us (which were otherwise sufficient) namely, to worship the Father and the Son, and to be filled with the Spirit, we are obliged to employ our weak reasonings in explaining things incomprehensible." Every sincere believer, in every age, has had occasion to make the same remark, when called to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

His views of the Three Persons in the Trinity are remarkably perspicuous and scriptural. In speaking of the Holy Spirit, he says, that he enlightens our understandings and warms our hearts;‡ that he is the author of all grace, and will be with us to the end of the world; that he is our comforter here while we live in expectation of a future life, the earnest of our hopes, the light of our minds, and the warmth of our souls. He directs us

* I apprehend, that if this method had been followed in all ages, there never would have been found any one to oppose the doctrine of the Trinity. Agreeably to this, it appears that Hilary, by the study of the Scriptures alone, had obtained and steadily professed the Nicene faith, before he had ever seen the creed of that name, or knew any thing of the Arian controversy.

† Thus owing his influence on the two leading powers of the human mind, the understanding and the will; not on one alone, but on both, agreeably to the views of the best and wisest in all ages.

to pray for this Holy Spirit, to enable us to do good, and to persevere in faith and obedience.

There will be no occasion to take any farther notice of his writings, unless it be to mention his addresses to the emperor on the same subject. Two he wrote with decency and moderation; in the third, he appears evidently to smart under the wounds of persecution, and treats the prince with an unchristian asperity, for which no other apology can be made, than the same which must be made for Athanasius, namely, "that oppression maketh a wise man mad." In general, there is a proportion preserved in the Church between doctrinal light and holy practice. Sanctification is carried on by the knowledge of the truth. And the superior degree of that knowledge, in the first and second century, will account for the superior degree of Christian meekness and charity, in those, who suffered for the Gospel, compared with the practice of the saints of the fourth century.

Hilary, after his conversion, was singularly exemplary in his attachment to the Gospel, avoiding any appearance of countenancing the fashionable heresies, and employed himself in recommending his religion to others. He was married, and had by his wife a daughter called Abra, whose education he superintended with great exactness. The gradual progress of superstition may be remarked from his case. He certainly cohabited with his wife after he was appointed bishop of Poitiers, and yet he strongly recommended his daughter to devote herself wholly to the service of Christ by a state of virginity. To relate his active employment in the Arian controversy, would be again to introduce a subject with which the reader has been already satiated. Suffice it to say, that he spent some time in banishment, in Phrygia, for the sake of a good conscience; that he was at length restored to his see; and that by his lenity on the one hand, which provoked the Luciferians, and by his constancy on the other, which offended the Arian emperor, he was yet enabled to be of signal service to the Church, and was to the West what Athanasius was to the East, the pillar of orthodoxy. The Latin Church, indeed, was never so much infested with Arianism as the Greek; and France, in particular, was through him preserved from the reigning heresy. He died at Poitiers about the year 367. To

him the great church at Poitiers is dedicated, and in the midst of the city is a column erected to him, with an inscription, at once expressive of the admiration of his virtues, and of the superstition of those who wrote it.*

Hilary died,
A. D. 367,
at the age
of 80.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BASIL OF CÆSAREA.†

BASIL, surnamed the Great, on account of his learning and piety, was descended from Christian ancestors, who suffered much during the persecution of Dioclesian. His grandmother Macrina, herself a Confessor for the faith of Christ, and a disciple of Gregory Thaumaturgus, was eminently useful to him, in superintending his education, and fixing his principles. After a strict domestic education in Cappadocia, his native country, he travelled for improvement in knowledge, according to the custom of those, whose circumstances enabled them to bear the expense, and came to Athens. Here he met with Gregory Nazianzen, with whom he had a very cordial intimacy. At length, leaving him there, he came to Constantinople, and put himself under the care of the famous Libanius. It is certain, that he was possessed of all the secular learning of the age, and if he had chosen to give himself wholly to the world, he might have shone as much, as superior parts, strong understanding, and indefatigable industry united, can effect. But his mind was under a spiritual influence; he found an emptiness in the most refined enjoyments of literature; even Athens itself, he called a vain felicity. He was led to seek for food for his soul, and, in conjunction with Gregory, he studied the works of Origen; and some monuments of their veneration for that learned father are still extant.‡

* Divo Hilario, Urbis propugnatori, fidelissimo, assiduissimo, certissimo, Pietavorum Episcopo.—"To Saint Hilary, the defender of the city, most faithful, assiduous, and certain, the bishop of Poitiers."

† The epistles of Basil still extant, with the writings of his friend Gregory Nazianzen, and the two historians, Socrates and Sozomen, afford materials sufficiently ample for his life. Cave has given us a connected view of his actions, and Du Pin has reviewed his letters.

‡ Viz. The Philocalia of Origen, consisting

It will scarcely be needful to add, that, by this means, he contracted a taste for exposition, neither the most evangelical, nor the most perspicuous. In his travels into Egypt he conversed with monks and hermits, and prepared himself for that excessive attachment to the spirit of Asceticism, which afterwards made him the great supporter and encourager of those superstitions.

It is my duty, however, to look for the spouse of Christ, wherever I can find her, although she may be disguised by an unsuitable and foreign garb. Julian the apostate had known him, when they studied together at Athens, and being now advanced to the empire, he invited Basil to his court. But the fear of God, and the love of heavenly things, which undoubtedly predominated in this saint, suffered him not to give way to the temptation for a moment. He wrote with Christian sincerity to the emperor, and provoked him by his faithful rebukes; choosing rather to live in Cæsarea a despised Christian, than to share in the honours and riches of the court, to which his uncommon endowments and abilities would have advanced him.

After some time, he lived in retirement at Neocæsarea in Pontus, and by his example, concurring with the spirit of the times, he not only drew over his friend Gregory, but also great numbers, to embrace a retired life, and to employ themselves in prayer, singing of psalms, and devotional exercises. And here, these two friends formed the rules of monastic discipline, which were the basis of all those superstitious institutions which afterwards overran the church. The want of a more evangelical view of doctrine, and of course of that lively faith which would animate and enable the Christian to live above the world, though in the midst of it, was, doubtless, the principal cause of the overflowing of this spirit among real good men in these times. To flee from society seemed to them the only possible way to escape the pollutions of the world, which they sincerely abhorred. Self-righteousness and ignorance fomented the evil, which gradually degenerated into a vapid system of formality, and at length became a sink of secret wickedness. But he, who should, in these times, suspect the genu-

ality of monks of hypocrisy and profligacy, would injure them much. On the contrary, the flower of the flock of Christ, in these days, is to be looked for among them.

While Basil was employed in founding monasteries in the neighbouring parts, he also caused hospitals to be erected for the poor; and as he had been ordained priest before he left Cæsarea, he was useful in preaching up and down the country.

Returning, after a time, to Cæsarea, he distinguished himself by inducing the rich to supply the necessities of the poor during a grievous famine; and all the world gave him credit both for his charity in relieving the distressed, and for his integrity in resisting the importunities of Valens the Arian emperor.

The see of Cæsarea being vacant, the authority of the aged Gregory, bishop of Nazianzum, the father of his friend, was sincerely exerted for his promotion; and to this see he was at length advanced, notwithstanding the opposition of the Arians. He was soon called to withstand the repeated attacks of Valens; and though he was in the utmost danger of being banished from his see, he remained immovable in the profession of the faith.

Let us attend a little to the pastoral character of Basil. He found the church of Cæsarea, before his time, had been scandalously neglected in its discipline. Officers, who were a disgrace to religion, ministered in the church, and the subaltern superintendents* ordained men without the knowledge of the bishop, and without any just examination; and many pressed into the ministry for mere secular reasons: it was reported that some were even guilty of selling the priesthood for money, the crime usually known by the name of simony. Basil reminded his clergy of the strictness of the primitive discipline, and of the care formerly exercised by the presbyters and deacons in examining the lives and manners of the persons to be ordained; and he made earnest attempts to revive the laudable customs, inveighing against simony as most detestable.

It would be tedious to describe the diverse contests in which Basil was engaged. Calumny, malice, and the do-

of Scriptural Questions, and Origen's Comments, which these two friends compiled.

* Chorepiscopi. A sort of under-bishops in great dioceses.

minceering power of Arianism, afflicted him with various trials, in which his patience was unwearied; and as his body became enfeebled by increasing distempers, his mind seems to have collected more vigour. Finding himself rapidly declining, after he had governed the church of Cæsarea eight years and some months, he ordained some of his followers, and was then obliged to take to his bed. The people flocked about his house, sensible of the value of such a pastor. For a time he discoursed piously to those who were about him, and sealed his last breath with the ejaculation, "Into thy hands I commend my spirit!"

It is much to be lamented, that a man so sincerely pious, so profoundly learned, and of so elegant and accomplished a genius, should have suffered so much, both in mind and body, from the monastic spirit. But his excessive austerities broke his constitution, and left him for years, in a very imperfect state of health. He died in the year 379.

His doctrine appears, from his works, to be too much clouded with self-righteous and superstitious mixtures, to contribute materially to the instruction and the consolation of sincere souls, though it is evident, that he revered the influences of the Holy Spirit, and placed his hope of salvation in Christ Jesus. Hear how Basil speaks of faith. "Faith, above all natural methods, draws the soul to a firm acquiescence in the word: Faith, which is the effect, not of geometrical conclusions, but the result of the energy of the Spirit."* So clearly spiritual was his religion, with all its imperfections! To this testimony of Basil concerning divine faith, as distinct from that which is merely natural, it may be proper to add that of Nemes de homine, c. 2. another Greek father, whose time seems not far remote from Basil's. "The doctrine of the divine oracles hath its credibility from itself, because of its divine inspiration." On one subject, namely, the love of heavenly things in opposition to earthly, he excelled, both in precept and example. In this the power of grace appeared in him through life, and even the whole system of his errors in divinity was connected with it. The very principle of the ascetic life was with Basil a supreme desire to live above

the world. Those who understand the foundation of the Gospel better than he did, may find it not amiss to attend to such pathetic exhortations as these:

"One says,* I will give to-morrow, to excuse himself from giving to-day. Alas! do you know whether you shall be alive to-morrow? Another says, I am poor, I have need enough myself of all my means. Yes, you are poor, you are destitute, but it is of love, of benignity, of faith, and of mercy. A third says, whom do I wrong? I keep only my own. I ask you, from whom did you receive those riches, and whence did you bring them? Did you not come naked from your mother's womb, and shall you not return naked to the dust? Whence did this wealth come? from chance? what is this but Atheism? if you confess that you received it from God, why did it fall to your lot rather than to another's? God is not unrighteous in the unequal division of property among men. Why are you rich, and why is this man poor? it is, that you may receive the reward of dispensing your goods faithfully, and that the poor may receive the recompense of his patience. When, therefore, you appropriate to yourself that wealth which belongs to many, and of which you are the steward, you are a robber.—We know not what necessities may happen. Can you make this apology, while you spend your wealth on a thousand superfluities?—But I want it for my children.—But, is it from you, that your son received life? is it not from God? ought he, then, to hinder you from obeying God's commandments? The riches that you will leave him, may be the occasion of his ruin. Who knows, whether he will make a good or a bad use of them?"—the pretences of those, who think to exempt themselves from doing good in their lifetime, by leaving their goods, by will, to the poor, he thus refutes: "Wretched men, to practise no good works, but with ink and paper! It seems, you wish you could have enjoyed your riches for ever, and then you would never have obeyed the precepts of the Gospel: it is to death, it seems, and not to you, that the poor are indebted. God will not be thus mocked; that which is dead is not to be offered to the sanctuary: offer up a living sacrifice."—It is certain, that those, who rely on Divine Providence, are like the springs which are not

* Basil on Psalm cxy.

* Basil's Homilies. Du Pin.

dried up by drawing from them, but send forth their waters with greater force. If you are poor, lend your money upon interest to God, who is rich.

Different vices predominate in different periods. If, by reviewing various ages, I can gain a more enlarged way of thinking, and cease to admire exclusively that in which I live, this will be one advantage of my historical travel. Certain it is, that the present age is remarkable for a selfish and narrow mode of conception, and a contempt of antiquity. How many, whose reading has scarcely reached farther than a Monthly Review or Magazine, are apt to felicitate themselves on their exemption from superstition, and to deride all monks as perfect fools! If we conceive a man in Basil's days, possessed of the same contracted spirit, and capable of foreseeing the exclusively mercantile taste of the present race of men; would not he be disposed to censure their covetousness? and would not the vice appear as ridiculous to such a one, as superstition does to the moderns? Is it not as absurd and foolish in its nature?—The wisdom of man lies not in satirizing the vices of others, but in correcting his own.

CHAPTER XXIV.

GREGORY NAZIANZEN.

He was born at Ariazum, an obscure village belonging to Nazianzum in Cappadocia, and came into the world about the time of the Nicene council.* His father, of the same name, a person of rank, had been brought up among a particular sect, most resembling the Samaritans, who professed a mixture of Judaism and Paganism. To this opinion, as it had been the religion of his family, Gregory the elder was in early life extremely devoted. But marrying a lady of rank, and of sincere Christian piety, he was gradually induced to attend to the doctrines of the Gospel. Her prayers and persuasions were equally ardent. Gregory the elder

dreaming one night that he sung that passage, "I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord," and feeling an uncommon pleasure on the occasion, informed his wife of the circumstance, who exhorted him to comply with the call of God to his soul. And soon after, Leontius bishop of Cæsarea, coming to Nazianzum, in his way to the council of Nice, Gregory the elder was encouraged and assisted by him, and then received from the bishop of Nazianzum catechetical instruction, and the ordinance of baptism.

Nazianzum itself had but newly received Christianity. The bishop who baptized Gregory the elder, was the first of its pastors, and died soon after. A long vacancy took place, and the town was overrun with ignorance and vice. Gregory the elder at length was appointed to the see, which he filled for forty-five years with great success among the people. His son, Gregory the younger, the famous Gregory, usually called Gregory Nazianzen, making uncommon advances in learning, in several seminaries, went to Athens, to complete his education. During the voyage, a remarkable providence was made subservient to his conversion. A storm suddenly arose, and the vessel was for several days in imminent danger. Gregory lamented his want of baptism and of serious Christianity, and with vehement prayers devoted himself to God to be his forever, if he would be pleased to spare his life at that time. When he had finished his prayer, the tempest ceased, and the ship was securely conducted to her port.

His acquaintance with Basil at Athens has been mentioned. Here also he conversed with Julian the apostate, and, with that intuitive penetration into character, which seems a peculiar gift to some minds, he foretold what a curse he would one day prove. See, said he, what a pest the Roman empire nourishes in its bowels! Yet Julian, at that time, had done nothing to justify such suspicions. He attended Christian forms; nor was he naturally savage or inhuman. The penetrating eye of Gregory discerned, however, the embryo of the apostate and the scorner, in his bold and fearless spirit of disputation, and in his presumptuous curiosity;—temper in youth, which, if strong and predominant, and accompanied with quickness of parts, without special grace, seldom fail to produce remarkable fruits of

* Though I have consulted Socrates and Sozomen, yet the account of Cæcilius is so full and circumstantial, and so well supported by original authorities, that I shall have little occasion to do any thing more than to abridge the life of Gregory, written by the latter, except to avail myself of the industry of Du Pin, when I make a few remarks on the works of this Father.

impiety in maturer age, and are rather cherished than damped by sobriety of manners and intenseness of application. Pride converts every specious virtue into nourishment for herself; and Satan knows no agent in the world so proper as pride for the promotion of his kingdom of darkness.

After his baptism, he felt himself strongly inclined to the ascetic life, but was, though reluctant, made a presbyter by his father. The old man, better versed in prayer than disputation, was once imposed on, by Arian subtleties, to communicate with that sect, while he took them to be what they were not, but was recovered from the snare by the arguments of his more learned son. The latter, after giving away for some time to the monastic spirit of solitude, was prevailed on at length to return to Nazianzum, and to employ himself in a manner more worthy of a Christian, by assisting his aged father in his pastoral cares.

His friend Basil offering him the bishopric of Sasima, in his diocese of Cæsarea, and the place being very mean and obscure, the pride of Gregory was hurt, and for sometime a coldness subsisted between the two friends, both of whom appear not to have possessed, in any great degree, the humble simplicity of better times. Their fondness to Platonism, and their accurate acquaintance with secular learning, had doubtless no tendency to supply the defects of their Christian views of doctrine.

Gregory rejecting the offer of Sasima, continued to assist his father, and had then an opportunity of enforcing a Christian duty, constantly allowed to be such in the primitive times, namely, submission to the higher powers, as well as to give the most excellent advice to the governor of Nazianzum—to use his power with moderation. Some civil tumults and broils at that place furnished him with this occasion.

His father dying near a hundred years old, and his mother soon after, both of them persons of uncommon piety, Gregory was induced to go to Constantinople. Here, under the emperor Valens, Arianism was at its height, and Gregory preached to a few Christians in a sort of conventicle; but, growing popular and successful, he was at last appointed bishop; and at length, under Theodosius, he was confirmed in the charge. It proved, however, extremely uneasy to him, notwithstanding

ing the kindness of the emperor. His liberality and integrity were indeed admirable, and his private life and manners were most exemplary. But the weakness of his body, the irritability of his temper, and his extreme deficiency in talents for government, rendered him, notwithstanding the just renown of his incomparable oratory, unfit for so public a station.

The Gospel was, however, adorned by his virtues, and particularly, by the meekness with which he forgave a person who had been suborned to murder him, and who, having been baffled in his purpose by Providence, came to him in agony of conscience, and confessed his intentions.

While he was at Constantinople, the famous council was held there for the settlement of the peace of the church; during the course of which, Gregory, a man of tried honesty, but void of political refinement, found himself so much opposed by those who envied him, and his best designs so much misconstrued, that he entreated Theodosius to accept his resignation. His farewell sermon, in which he reminded his audience of what God had done by him from his first preaching among them, when he was attacked with stones by the Arians, is a master-piece of eloquence, and moved the passions of the audience exceedingly. There is in it too great a show of eloquence, and too little of the Gospel of Christ.

A second synod being held at Constantinople, Gregory, disgusted with the treatment he had met with in the first, and being also afflicted with a very infirm state of health, refused to come, and expressed himself with unbecoming acrimony against councils in general. However, he exerted himself sincerely to promote unity in the church, and was unbounded in his liberality to the poor. In his time he was looked on as an admirable theologian. And indeed, in justness of taste, eloquence and secular learning, he was inferior to few; and these shining qualities, in an age more contentious than simple with respect to religion, procured him an admiration for Christian knowledge above his deserts. He died in the year 389, in his own country.

Gregory dies,
A. D. 389.

His principal writings are his sermons. The first of them describes the difficulties and importance of the pastoral office, blames the forwardness of many to undertake it, and describes himself confounded

under a sense of his insufficiency. In two other discourses he inveighs against Julian in a manner that discovers more of the orator than the Christian. In another discourse, he endeavours to reconcile the minds of the people of Nazianzum to the payment of taxes. He observes, that Jesus Christ came into the world at a time when a tax was levied, to show that God is present at such scenes; that he was made man, and did himself pay taxes, to comfort those who were in bondage, and to teach them to bear it patiently; that by thus abasing himself he taught kings to treat their subjects with moderation; that tribute was a consequence of the first sin, because war, the cause of tribute, was the consequence of sin, and a just punishment of God.

His warm and pathetic addresses to deceased saints were evidently little else than mere strokes of oratory. They were accompanied with the expression of a doubt, whether the saints understood what he said. He seems, however, to have strengthened the growing superstition, and encouraged that worship of saints, which he certainly did not intend, in the manner in which it was afterwards practised. Unguarded passages of this sort occur in other writers of these times, none of whom really designed to inculcate idolatry.

In another discourse, he protests against the too common practice of delaying baptism, which, from the example of Constantine, had grown very fashionable, for reasons equally corrupt and superstitious. Men lived in sin as long as they thought they could safely, and deferred baptism till their near approach to death, under a groundless hope of washing away all their guilt at once. He presses the baptism of infants, and refutes the vain pretences of those who followed the fashionable custom.

His poems demonstrate a rich vein of genius and a sensibility of mind. Nor is there wanting a true spirit of piety. In the fifty-eighth are some excellent reflections on the falsehood of mere human virtue, the necessity of divine grace through Jesus Christ, and of an humble confidence in it, and the danger of perishing

through pride and vain glory. A humility of this sort was evidently at the bottom of Gregory's religion; but I much doubt whether his less learned parents did not understand it, practically, much better than he. Mankind are naturally more favourable to gifts than to graces, and even good men are but too ready to suppose there is much of the latter, wherever there appears an abundance of the former.

Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, was not inferior to many in this century for unfeigned purity of faith and manners. But the particulars of his life are for the most part uninteresting. It is proper, however, to mention his zeal in tearing a painted curtain which he saw in a place of public worship. This seems at once a proof of his detestation of images and pictures in religion, and also of the weak beginnings of that superstition in the fourth century. In this place let us not omit to observe his very laudable spirit of beneficence. Numbers from all parts sent him large sums to distribute to the needy, in confidence of his charity and integrity. His steward one day informed him, that his stock was nearly exhausted, and blamed his profuse liberality; but he continued still as liberal as before, till all was gone; when he received suddenly from a stranger a large bag of gold. Another story deserves to be recorded as a monument of Divine Providence, the rather, as it seems extremely well authenticated.* Two beggars agreeing to impose on him, one feigned himself dead, the other begged of Epiphanius to supply the expenses of his companion's funeral. Epiphanius granted the request; the beggar on the departure of the bishop desired his companion to rise; but the man was really dead!—To sport with the servants of God, and to abuse their kindness, is to provoke God, himself, as the bishop told the survivor.

Epiphanius born about A. D. 320, elected Bishop of Cyprus in 366, died in 403.

* Sozom. B. VII. c. 27.

CENTURY V.

CHAPTER I.

JOHN CHRYSOSTOM.

SOME brief account of this renowned Father will properly introduce the fifth century to the acquaintance of the reader, because the transactions with which his story is connected extend a few years from the last century into this, and are very descriptive of the religious state of the East at that time.

He was, at the commencement of the century, bishop of Constantinople, where the emperor Arcadius resided, while his brother Honorius reigned in the West: these two were the sons and successors of the great Theodosius. But we must look back to the rise of John Chrysostom. He

was born at Antioch* about the year 351. His parents were persons of some rank, and by the care of his mother

Chrysostom born A. D. 354. (for he lost his father soon after his birth) his education was attended to in a very particular manner. By her means, he had the advantage of being early prejudiced in favour of Christianity. Yet, being naturally studious of eloquence, he devoted himself to the care of that great master, Libanius of Antioch, who being one day asked, who would be capable of succeeding him in his school; "John," said he, "if the Christians had not stolen him from us." So great was the idea he had formed of his powers of eloquence.

He prognosticated right. It would be easy to produce abundance of instances of his oratorical abilities. I wish it were in my power to record as many of his evangelical excellencies.

Having pleaded a little time in the Forum, he began to find a vacancy in his mind not to be supplied by secular arts and studies. The Spirit of God seems, from that time, to have drawn him to study the Scriptures, and one material advantage he derived from his master Diodorus, who was afterwards bishop of Tarsus: By him he was taught to forsake the popular whims of Origen, and to investigate the literal and historical sense of the Divine word; a practice, in which

he differed from most of the fathers of his times.

He contracted an intimate friendship with one Basil, whom, by a deceit, he drew into the acceptance of a bishopric; nor is he ashamed to justify himself in doing evil that good may come.* We have seen the deliberate fraud practised by Ambrose to avoid a bishopric.† And I find Chrysostom, in his exposition of the second chapter of the epistle to the Galatians, supposes, that both Paul and Peter were laudably engaged in fraud, because their views were charitable and pious. We shall afterwards have occasion to consider this matter a little more fully, when we come to the controversy between Jerom and Augustine on the subject. At present, suffice it to observe, that the decline in doctrine had evidently produced a decline in ethics; that the examples of men, otherwise so justly reputable, as Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Jerom,‡ must have had a pernicious effect on Christian morals; and that the growth of austere superstition was unfavourable to truth and integrity.

Notwithstanding the entreaties of his pious mother, he lived in monastic austerities for some time; after which, Flavian, bishop of Antioch, promoted him to the office of presbyter in his diocese. About the year 379, a sedition broke out at Antioch, on account of taxes, and the people dragged about the streets the statues of Theodosius, and of his excellent lady Flaccilla, and of their two sons, in contempt. But finding afterwards the danger of the emperor's resentment, this inconstant and turbulent people were in the greatest distress. Antioch had ever been very favourable to the name, at least, of Christianity, since the time that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. But luxury and the love of the world, were, it is to be feared, much more common in these times than godliness,

* Sacerdotio, B. I.

† See page 329 of this Volume.

‡ The reader will carefully observe, that Augustine is not involved in this censure, in the least degree. Let it be observed also, that these pious frauds had no connexion with the love of lucre, and arose more properly from superstition, than from hypocrisy.

even among the Christian inhabitants. About two hundred thousand citizens made up the sum total; and half of these were Christians. John failed not to improve the opportunity. Serious as he himself was in Christian views, so far as he understood them, and excellent as a preacher of the law, he exhorted them to repentance, and very properly made the awful suspense they were then in, an instructive emblem of our expectation of the day of judgment. Hymns and litanies were composed to solicit God to move the heart of the emperor to pity; and many, who had never attended the house of God, and had spent their whole time in the theatre, now joined in divine worship with much earnestness and assiduity. Flavian the bishop, though aged and infirm, undertook a journey to Constantinople to deprecate the wrath of the emperor. Litanies the sophist also did the same; but the generality of the philosophers hid themselves in holes and corners, and did nothing for their country in danger; while the monks left their cells, and flocked into the city, and entreated the magistrates and judges to behave with lenity. One Macedonius particularly* addressed the Commissioners, and desired them to admonish the emperor not to destroy the image of God, lest he should provoke the Divine Artist; which he might think would be the case, when he reflected how angry he himself was for the sake of brazen statues. Thus, even monks, who exalted Christianity in a degenerate form, exceeded in benevolence and active virtue the boasted and boasting sons of philosophy!

The spirit of Chrysostom, in the mean time, was softened and overawed with the mingled sensations of pity and devotion, while he observed the severe proceedings of the courts, and the vain intercessions of relations for husbands and fathers. He was led to reflect how awful the day of judgment will be, when not a mother, sister, or father can arrest the course of Divine justice, or give the least relief to nearest relations; and, in his homilies, he with much eloquence and piety gathered these considerations on a guilty, unthinking people. Pastors may take the hint from hence to improve temporal scenes to the spiritual benefit of their flocks.

The generous and good-natured Theo-

dosius expostulated with Flavian on the unreasonableness and ingratitude of the citizens of Antioch to himself, who had ever been as a parent and benefactor to them. Flavian, admitting the truth of his observations, and confessing the aggravated guilt of the city, pressed him with the divine rule, If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. And his pathetic and pious admonitions prevailed. Theodosius owned, that if the great Lord of the world for our sake, became a servant, and prayed for his murderers, it highly became himself to forgive his fellow-servants; and with great tenderness he solicited the bishop to hasten his return, and to deliver the citizens from their fears. In the mean time the active charity of the monks and clergy had prevailed on the judges to suspend their proceedings till they heard from the emperor; and Flavian himself returned at length with the news of the city being fully restored to his favour. These are some of the triumphs of the Gospel. Its mild influence on society, in the suppression of the fights of gladiators and other savage practices, and in the kind and liberal behaviour of emperors towards their subjects, even in times when true religion was at no great height, demonstrate, not only that states act unwisely, when they venture to reject Christianity altogether, and to substitute mere ethics in its stead; but also, that it is the duty of governors and legislators, as much as in them lies, by positive institutions to promote the knowledge and influence of that divine religion.

In the year 398, Chrysostom, by the advice of Eutropius, chief chamberlain of the palace, was appointed bishop of Constantinople, being married thither by a fraudulent scheme, such as he himself had approved in like cases. The emperor Arcadius, a character of the most insipid insignificance, fixed in the metropolitanical chair a person of great integrity, activity, and virtue indeed; but surely not through any wisdom of his own. John began immediately to attempt the reformation of his diocese. He put an end to a custom of the clergy of keeping matrons in their families, which caused much scandal; he censured their covetousness and their luxury; retrenched the expenses of the bishop's table, and applied the sur-

Made Bishop of Constantinople,

A. D. 398.

* Theodoret, B. V. c. 20.

plus to the needy; built a large hospital* for the infirm, and put it under the most salutary regulations. Such ministers as refused to amend their lives, he suspended from their offices; and the widows who were maintained by the church, were admonished to abstain from their gay manner of living, or else to marry. And he pressed the laity, whose employments filled up the day, to attend divine worship in the evening.

The common people heard him gladly, as, for a time at least, they generally will hear, in all ages, a preacher who speaks to the conscience, though severely, yet faithfully, with earnest desire exhibited in his whole manner to do them good. Even some of the Dissenters attended on his preaching; nor did he labour in vain in reclaiming heretics.† The Clergy, indolent and corrupt as they then were, opposed him vehemently, and watched opportunities against him. The wealthy and the great, offended at his plain reproofs, were as ill-disposed as the clergy. Chrysostom however perse-

vered; nor did he confine his cares to Constantinople. In order to overcome the Arianism of the Goths, he ordained some persons of their country, to whom he assigned a church within the city, and by their industry he reclaimed many. He himself often preached there, and prevailed on others of the clergy to do the same. He made liberal and active attempts to spread the Gospel among barbarous nations, though the troubles which afterwards befel him, must have checked both these and other Christian designs.*

In an age of luxury and extreme relaxation of discipline, it might be expected that the uprightness and inflexible integrity of Chrysostom would expose him to many inconveniences. During the negligent administration of his predecessor Nectarius the successor of Gregory Nazianzen, a remarkable alteration for the worse, in point of discipline, had taken place. There had been a presbyter, whose special office it was to receive the confession of penitents, and by his authority they were admitted to the communion. Superstition, most probably, had guided too much the formalities of this discipline; but profaneness was still worse, and the Lord's Supper was now open to all sorts of characters, no other rules being prescribed than what men chose to impose on themselves. It was not in the power of Chrysostom, in a metropolis so dissolute, and so much under the secular influence, to restore the discipline of the church in this respect. What was wanting, he supplied by preaching with the most laudable energy, and he exhorted men to repent again and again, and then to attend the Lord's Supper. He was evidently speaking of private, not of public penitence. Yet his expressions were perversely interpreted by two sorts of men, of very opposite characters, the Novatians, and the more dissolute persons of the general church. The former still maintained their favourite point, of never receiving the lapsed at all; the latter accused him of giving a license to sin. Yet if the distinction between private and public penitence be attended to, the innocence of Chrysostom's expressions will be sufficiently clear, and he will appear to have only exhorted them to repentance on the encouragement of the divine mercies in Christ, which offer pardon to repeated and multiplied

* The superiority of Christianity, considered in an ethical and political point of view, to all other religions, may deserve to be an object of attention. We have seen great proofs of it already. It is difficult to prove a negative proposition; I can only say, therefore, that I do not recollect any such humane and beneficent provisions for the poor in the whole circle of ancient Paganism; nor do I remember any one of the philosophers, who was ever sedulously employed, by word or deed, for the lower ranks of men. True religion visits the fatherless and widows in their affliction. With justice might Ambrose, observing the liberality which the church exercised to the needy, ask the Pagans, Let them tell me, what captives were redeemed, what hospitals maintained, what exiles provided for, by the income of the temples?

† A visible reformation of manners in a capital, which had long suffered under Arian impiety, and had fallen into a general relaxation of discipline, attended his labours. Persons, who hitherto had frequented the public shows, now came in crowds to public worship. Here he expounded various parts of the New Testament. He preached three times a week, and sometimes seven days successively. The crowd was so great, that to place himself where he might be heard, he was obliged to sit in the middle of the church, in the reader's desk. He reformed likewise the churches of the neighbouring provinces of Thrace, Asia, and Pontus. It appears that various churches in the East were administered with shameful corruption and profligacy, and several bishops, by the vigour of Chrysostom's zeal, were deposed.

* Fleury, B. XX. 40. Sozom. B. VIII. c. 5.

transgressions. With what malevolence this great man was treated by the dissolute, may be easily conceived, when so grave a person as Socrates the historian, who had a partial fondness for Novatianism, expresses his wonder, that Chrysostom should have given such encouragement to sin, in his sermons, and have contradicted the canons of the church, which had been made with the excessive rigour that characterized the third century, and had forbidden the indulgence of communion to be granted any more than once to offenders.* Nor is this the only instance in which the zeal and uprightness of good men exposes them, in a malignant world, to the censure of opposite characters; of those, who carry the profession of strictness too far, and of those, who scarce pretend to any at all. Chrysostom was accused, on this account, by the profligate bishops, and was also censured by Sisinus, bishop of the Novatians in Constantinople, who wrote a book against him and censured him with great severity.

Of this Sisinus I shall not record what Socrates thinks it worth while to spend one chapter upon.† For, though he evidently desires to interest the reader in his favour, he records nothing but what tends to show him to have been a polite, fascinating, well-bred gentleman, who made himself very agreeable to all parties, and was a contrast to the severity of Chrysostom by his engaging manners. He survived the latter, and lived on terms of amity with Athanas his successor; and I should with pleasure recite an account of his pious labours and success in the ministry, could I find any real proof that he was endued with the spirit of the Gospel, and exhibited it in his conduct. Though the article of dress is but an external thing, his wearing white garments, against the mode of the time, when the clergy were habited in black, was certainly indecent; nor is his saying, that there was no scripture which required the wearing of black, a satisfactory apology.

It is not from such courtly characters as these, that reformation in the Church, in an age of corruption like that at the beginning of this century, is to be expected. Chrysostom was doubtless endowed with many qualities which belong to a reformer. Socrates owns his extreme temperance, and at the same time blames him for the

vice of anger, and the charge seems but too just.

This infirmity, too common to men of generous and noble minds, gave, no doubt, great advantage to his enemies, and concerted with various circumstances to crush the bishop of Constantinople. A synod at length, held and managed by Theophilus bishop of Alexandria, his determined enemy, and one of the worst ecclesiastical characters in history, supported by the influence of the proud Eudoxia, the empress, condemned him with extreme injustice. I shall not stain these pages with a detail of their iniquitous proceedings.* It is more to our purpose to notice his conduct under the severe persecution.

Chrysostom, foreseeing the effect of the storm which was gathering round him, addressed himself to the bishops who were his friends, assembled in the great room of his house.† "Brethren, be earnest in prayer; and as you love our Lord Jesus, let none of you for my sake desert his charge. For, as was St. Paul's case, I am ready to be offered up, and the time of my departure is at hand. I see I must undergo many hardships, and then quit this troublesome life. I know the subtlety of Satan, who cannot bear to be dally tormented with my preaching. By your constancy you will find mercy at the hand of God; only remember me in your prayers." The assembly being afflicted with vehement sorrow, he besought them to moderate their grief; "for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." "I always told you this life is a road in which joys and sorrows both pass swiftly away. The visible scene of things before us is like a fair, where we buy and sell, and sometimes recreate ourselves. Are we better than the patriarchs? Do we excel the prophets and apostles, that we should live here for ever?" When one of the company passionately bewailed the desolations of the Church, the bishop, striking

* Among the other charges, he was accused of saying, "If thou sinnest again, repent again; and as oft as thou sinnest, come to me again, and I will heal thee." This is the caution already spoken to. That he spoke contemptuously of the clergy, and had written a whole book stuffed with falsehood against them; these also were among the articles of accusation, which, in general, betray the folly and malice of his enemies, and are more than sufficiently confuted by the piety and godly zeal, which appear in his writings still extant.

† Cave's Life of Chrysostom, Pallad. vita Chrysost. p. 67.

the end of his right fore-finger on the palm of his left hand (which he was accustomed to do, when much in earnest) said, "Brother, it is enough, pursue the subject no further; however, as I requested, desert not your churches. As for the doctrine of Christ, it began not with me, nor shall it die with me. Did not Moses die? and did not Joshua succeed him?—Paul was beheaded, and left he not Timothy, Titus, Apollos, and many more behind him?"

Eulysius bishop of Apamea answered, "But if we keep our churches we shall be compelled to communicate and subscribe." "Communicate," returns he, "you may, that you make not a schism in the church:" but subscribe not the decrees; for I am not conscious of having done any thing, for which I should deserve to be deposed."

As Theophilus assumed a power, which doubtless belonged not to him, and as Chrysostom observed, it did not become a man that lives in Egypt to judge one that lives in Thrace, the bishop of Constantinople refused to own the authority of the court. His enemies deposed him for contumacy, and to support their views, they informed the emperor Arcadius, that he had been guilty of treason, meaning the affront he had put on the empress in calling her Jezebel; and it is not improbable, but that he had, in some of his sermons, compared her to the wife of Ahab, whom, in truth, she much resembled in pride and cruelty.

* In this he doubtless acted with great propriety. Corrupt as the Eastern church then was, the corruption was rather in practice than in doctrine. And such a separation as afterwards took place at the Reformation, would have been very unjustifiable. Good men by remaining in it might do a thousand times more good, than they would be capable of doing by deserting it. And so long as the doctrine itself is preserved sound and pure, by the continuance of holy men in the church, who in that case can remain with a clear conscience, revivals may be expected from time to time. Of this we shall shortly see a solid instance in the Western church, and such we have seen in the church of England in our own times. Separation seems only justified in the case of a total corruption and incurable malady, such as that at the time of the Reformation. Hasty and intemperate schisms rend the church into miserable fragments, prevent, as far as man can prevent, any great and general revival of godliness, and are strongly guarded against in the epistolary writings of the New Testament.

The people of Constantinople, however, who sincerely loved the bishop, insisted on his being heard by more equitable judges, and so strong was their agitation, that Chrysostom, fearing a popular insurrection, delivered himself up secretly to the officer, who came to execute the imperial warrant against him. He was conveyed immediately to a port in the Black Sea. As soon as it was known that he was gone, the whole city was in an uproar; many blamed the emperor, who, in so weak a manner, had given up the most upright of men to the malice of his wife and of Theophilus. The tumult was at length so violent, that Eudoxia herself, frightened at the danger, pressed her husband to recall him, and even wrote to Chrysostom a letter full of protestations of sorrow and respect. Chrysostom was, therefore, restored to his bishopric. But the calm season lasted not long. A silver statue of the empress was solemnly erected in the street just before the great church of St. Sophia. It was dedicated with many heathenish extravagancies; and the people used to meet there in sports and pastimes, to the distraction of the congregation. The bishop, impatient of these things, blamed them from the pulpit, and with great imprudence began his sermon after this manner: "Now again Herodias rages and is vexed, again she dances, again she desires John's head in a charger."*

The enemies of the bishop could not desire a greater advantage. And they improved it to the utmost. Numbers were ready to gratify the resentment of Eudoxia. And Arcadius, overcome by importunity, again ordered his deposition. He was suspended and confined: His friends and followers were dispersed, rifled, killed, or imprisoned. Edicts were issued, severely threatening all that refused to renounce communion with Chrysostom. It was the season of Easter, when the catechumens, who had been instructed, were to receive baptism. The friends of Chrysostom fled into the fields to keep the festival there. The emperor

* The rashness of Chrysostom in this affair was so great, that I could not easily believe this account. But I see the truth of the story is confirmed by the authority both of Sozomen and Sozomen, and on consulting them it does not appear that any apology can be made for the bishop. He certainly mixed not the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove.

himself went out that day into a meadow adjoining to the city, and espied a field covered with white. These were the catechumens who had been baptized the night before, and had then their white garments upon them, being near three thousand in number. The emperor, being told that they were a conventicle of heretics, ordered a party of soldiers to disperse them. Several women of quality were very rudely treated on this occasion, and numbers were imprisoned and scourged. Resolving at length a warrant, signed by the emperor, to depart, Chrysostom exhorted the deaconesses to continue their care of the church, and to communicate with the bishop who should be chosen by common consent in his room,* and he retired once more from his See, in the year 404.

Chrysostom retires from his See.

Arasacius, brother of Nectarius, being appointed bishop in his stead, the friends of Chrysostom, in opposition to the advice which he had given them, refused to submit, and formed separate assemblies, and were severely persecuted by the name of Joannites. Among these friends was an opulent lady, called

Arasacius is made Bishop in his stead, A. D. 404.

Olympias, who had honoured him abundantly, and appears to have profited much by his ministry. She had acted in the church as a deaconess, and was now banished to Nicomedia, whence she supplied the exiled prelate with money. Here she lived many years, an example of piety.

Chrysostom himself was conveyed to Caucasus in Armenia, a barren cold region, infested with robbery, and mournfully marked already with the murder of

Chrysostom is conveyed to Caucasus in Armenia.

Paul, the former bishop of Constantinople. His journey to this place was attended with many grievous hardships, though sweetened with the compassionate care of various persons, who keenly sympathized with injured innocence. At Caucasus, however, he met with very generous treatment. Here he preached frequently to a people who heard him gladly. A grievous famine raging in those parts, he was enabled, by the liberality of Olym-

pias, to relieve the poor. And he redeemed many captives which had been taken by the Issaurian robbers. He had formerly conceived a plan for converting the Pagans which were still in Phœnicia, and had made some progress in it. But understanding that the design had met with a check, he again made vigorous attempts for the support of so good a work, and ordered sums of money for the erection of churches, and the support of missionaries. He seemed to recover his health for a time, but winter approaching he felt the usual effects of that season on persons of weak constitutions. His stomach had unhappily received much injury from the austerities of his youth, and never recovered its tone. The next spring he recruited, but always obliged to observe the strictest regimen.*

At Constantinople, Atticus was chosen to succeed Arasacius, who died in the year

405, and the Joannites were still persecuted in the Eastern church. Chrysostom himself was obliged to move from place to place on account of danger from robbers, and, as he wrote to Innocent, bishop of Rome, who sincerely,

Arasacius dies, A. D. 405; and Atticus succeeds to the See.

though unsuccessfully, laboured in his cause, he was in the third year of his banishment, exposed to famine, pestilence, war, continual sieges, an incredible desolation, to death every day, and to the Issaurian swords.

His enemies, beholding with an evil eye, the respect every where paid to him, procured an order for him to be removed to Pityus, the very shore of the Black Sea. In his way thither, he was brought to an Oratory of Basiliscus, who had suffered martyrdom under Dioclesian's persecution. Here he desired to rest, but his guards, who had all along treated him with brutish ferocity, refused him the in-

* This great imbecility was one reason why he had always dined alone, when bishop of Constantinople. It is well known, that to persons of his weak habit, the attendance at feasts and entertainments is one of the severest punishments. Chrysostom had still more weighty reasons for his recluseness; the sumptuousness of Constantinople was in a manner proverbial, and he thought it his duty to check it. If any thing can add to the wickedness of those accusations which drove him from his See, it is, that he was charged with pride for dining in solitude. Yet he had been very hospitable to the poor, and was an uncommon pattern of beneficence and liberality.

* Hence it is evident, that the appointment of a popular election of bishops was still kept up at Constantinople; but it could only be the appearance.

dulgence. Nature was however exhausted: he had not gone four miles, before he was so extremely ill, that they were obliged to return with him. Here he received the Lord's Supper, made his last prayer before them all, and having concluded with his usual doxology, "Glory

be to God for all events," he
(Chrysostom dies,

A. D. 407. breathed out his soul, in the

fifty-third year of his age, in the year 407. The Joannites continued their separate assemblies, till the year 438, when Proclus, then entering on the See, put an end to the schism, by making a panegyric on Chrysostom's memory, and procuring an order from the emperor Theodosius II. the son of Arcadius, that his body should be brought back to Constantinople with great funeral solemnity. He, who in his lifetime, had met with so many enemies, was now universally esteemed and admired, and Theodosius himself sincerely bewailed the injury done to so excellent a personage by his parents.

I have formerly observed, that the corruption of Christianity was deeper and stronger in great cities than in the country. The bishopric of Damasus at Rome, was an unhappy proof of this in the West; and in the East, the bishopric of Chrysostom, in the beginning of this century, affords a lamentable proof of the same thing. Never was there a more striking confirmation of the truth of the Christian doctrine, the original and native depravity of man. How often have we been told, that whatever is said, in the writings of the New Testament, of the carnal mind, and its enmity against God, of the wo denounced against those of whom all men speak well, of the persecution which must be sustained by those who love the Lord Jesus, belongs only to the apostolical age, or at least to the times preceding the era of Constantine, when heathenism prevailed in the Roman empire! Behold, the empire is become Christian; idolatry and all the rites of heathenism are subjected to legal penalties; the profession of the Gospel is become exceedingly honourable; and the externals of religion are supported by the magnificence of emperors, and by the fashion of the age, even with excessive sumptuousness. Behold a bishop of the first See, learned, eloquent beyond measure, of talents the most popular, of a genius the most exuberant, and of a solid understanding by nature; magnanimous

and generous, liberal I had almost said to excess, sympathizing with distress of every kind, and severe only to himself; a man of that open, frank, ingenuous temper, which is so proper to conciliate friendship; a determined enemy of vice, and of acknowledged piety in all his intentions! Yet we have seen him exposed to the keenest shafts of calumny, expelled with unrelenting rage by the united efforts of the court, the nobility, the clergy of his own diocese, and the bishops of other dioceses. What is to be said? His successor Atticus lived long in peace; and, by a cautious conduct preserved the good will of men in general; though he had joined in the persecution of Chrysostom. Sisinnius too, the Novatian, had in a degree joined in the same opposition. Both these men, however, by elegant and affable manners, conciliated the good will of man, and seem to have passed through life without any persecution. Whether men are of the general church, or of the dissenters, it matters not: the favour or the enmity of mankind depends not on such external distinctions. What either of these two did in opposing sin, I know not; nor is there enough recorded of them to fix their characters with certainty. With Chrysostom, who was evidently their superior in holiness and virtue, we have seen how hard it fared. He was choleric, and too vehement, no doubt; but he knew the importance of divine things, and was, therefore, much in earnest, and the best charity was, doubtless, at the bottom of all his zeal. If the world naturally loved what was good, could it not have thrown a candid veil over one fault, the frequent attendant of the most upright minds? Should it lavish its favours on men of ambiguous virtue and pusillanimous prudence? Certainly it seeth not as God seeth; it loves flattery and approves the decent appearance of virtue; not plain truth, not genuine virtue. Such seems the just conclusion from the case: real godliness, under Christian as well as heathen governments, is hated, dreaded, and persecuted. And the important doctrine of our native depravity is confirmed by such events, and proves itself to the senses of mankind.

I miss my aim in this history, if I show not the constant connexion between the doctrines of the Gospel and holy practice. This connexion is sufficiently plain in the history of Chrysostom: though, had he known divine truth more exactly,

and entered more experimentally into the spirit of the Gospel, he would have been more humble, and would have known better how to govern his own temper.

This great man, however, THOUGH DEAD, YET SPEAKS by his works. He laboured much in expounding the Scriptures, and though not copious in the exhibition of evangelical truth, still he every where shows that he loved it.* On those words of the Apostle, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, he says, "What a saying!—what mind can comprehend it! He made a just person a sinner, that he might make sinners just. But the Apostle's language is still stronger: He doth not say, he made him a sinner, but *sia*,—that we might be made, not righteous, but righteousness, even the righteousness of God. For it is of God, since not of works (which would require spotless perfection) but by grace we are justified, where all sin is blotted out." Here is a plain testimony to the Christian doctrine of justification, and under this shelter, this holy man, no doubt, found rest for his own soul.

Those who think every thing too much which is bestowed on a minister of Christ, may read a just defence of the maintenance of pastors, and a proper rebuke of their own uncharitableness, in his comment on *Philippians*, chapter the eleventh. On the fourth chapter of *Thessalonians*, in opening the Apostle's direction against fornication, he forcibly rebukes the prudential avarice of many parents, who prevent the marriage of their sons, till they are far advanced in life. In the mean time they are led into various temptations; and if they do marry afterwards, are too much corrupted by vicious habits to believe with that decorum in the marriage-state, which they might have done in more early life. His recommendations, therefore, early marriages; and the advice deserves the more attention, as coming from a man, who often expresses his admiration of the monastic life, which, however, he does without throwing any reproach on matrimony.

In occasionally speaking of that passage of St. Paul to the Romans, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth,"† he introduces the doctrine of free-will in the same manner as most of the fathers did, who spoke of it at all,

from the days of Justin, and observes, that the whole is said to be of God, because the greatest part is. So hard pressed is he with the plain words of the Apostle, which are directly opposite to the system he had imbibed. But Platonic philosophy had done this mischief to the Church, to the great hurt of Christian faith and humility.*

The chief use of his *Treatise on the Priesthood*, is to excite in young minds a serious awe with respect to the danger of misarrying in an office so important and so sacred, and to check the levity and presumption with which so many undertake it! He lays down, however, some good views of the difficulty of steering clear of extremes, in suiting instructions to particular cases, in checking impertinent curiosity, and in directing the people to useful objects.

The practical views of this writer, so far as they relate to the regulation of the conduct, are the most striking. Having lived in two great imperial cities, where plays and shows were very frequent, he earnestly inveighed against those disorders. He calls the stage an academy of incontinence. "What harm, say you, is there in going to a play? Is that sufficient to keep one from the Communion?" I ask you, can there be a more shameless sin, than to come to the holy table defiled with adultery? Hear the words of him who is to be our Judge. Jesus Christ saith, whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. What can be said of those, who passionately spend whole days in those places, in looking on women of ill-fame: with what face will they pretend to say, they did not behold them to lust after them!—They see women adorned on purpose to inspire lust. If, in the church itself, where Psalms are sung, the Scripture is read, and the fear of the Almighty appears, lust will creep in like a thief, how shall the frequenters of the stage overcome the motions of concupiscence!

* It may be worth while just to mention, that he pathetically rebukes the sloth and negligence of parents and masters, who would drive all the work of instruction on ministers, and do nothing themselves for the spiritual benefit of their household. A plain thought, but how true at this day!

† Balls and public meetings of entertainment are as much the objects of his indignation as plays. Games of chance also he represents as the occasions of blasphemies, losses, anger,

* *Hom. 2, on 2d Epist. to Cor. chap. v.*

† In his exposition on *Hebrews*, 7th chapter.

CHAPTER II.

AUGUSTINE'S CONFESSIONS ABRIDGED.

FROM the latter end of the third century to the former part of the fifth, we have seen a gradual declension of godliness; and when we view, in the West, the increase of monastic darkness and superstition; in the East, the same evils to a still greater degree, attended with such an augmentation of iniquity, that even where all the formalities of godliness are preserved, the power of it is hated and persecuted, in the same manner as by Pagans; in fine, when the vestiges of Christian truth are scarcely discernible, we shall not be far amiss in pronouncing, that, in such a state of Religion, the wholesome effects of the first effusion of the Spirit of God are brought to a close.

It is evident, that real Christianity, notwithstanding its nominal increase under Christian emperors, must soon have been extinct, if God had not interposed with a second great effusion of his Spirit. He did so in the course of the fifth century, and the Church rose again from its ruins in one part at least of the Empire.*

It behoves us to attend to this gracious display of divine goodness; and for this purpose, we must look back into the last century, to trace the secret springs of this dispensation. They particularly involve the private life of Augustine, bishop of Hippo. He was the great instrument of reviving the knowledge of evangelical truth. By a very remarkable work of divine grace on his own soul, he was qualified to contend with the growing corruptions. It is a happy circumstance, that we have, in his *Confessions*, a large and distinct account of his own conversion. And who could relate it like himself!—I proceed to give an account of these *Confessions*: the propriety and importance of so long a detail will afterwards appear.†

quarrels, and all manner of crimes. Du Pin. Chrysostom.

The truth is, men who really fear God, in all ages have been united against these things; and for this reason, which is felt by them, though not by others, namely, that they have too serious a conflict with indwelling sin, to give themselves up to external incitements of evil.

* The Western, as will appear in the course of the narrative.

† The life of this great man was written by Possidius, sometimes called Possidonius, a

Augustine's Confessions Abridged.

BOOK I.

Thou art great, O Lord, and most worthy to be praised; great is thy power, and of thy wisdom there is no end. A man, a portion of thy creation, wishes to praise thee, a man carrying about him his mortality, carrying about him the evidences of his sin, and a testimony that thou resistest the proud; even such a man wishes to praise thee. Thou excitest him, that he should delight to praise thee. For thou hast made us for thyself, and our heart is restless till it finds rest in thee.

Who shall give me to rest in thee? that thou mayest come into my heart, and inebriate it, that I may forget my own evils, and embrace thee, my only good! What art thou to me! Pity me, that I may speak. What am I to thee, that thou shouldst command me to love thee, and be displeased with me, if I do not, and threaten me with the greatest miseries? Is that itself a small misery, to be destitute of the love of thee? Alas! alas! tell me, by thy compassions, O Lord, my God, what art thou to me?

SAY UNTO MY SOUL, I AM THY SALVATION. So speak, that I may hear. Behold! the ears of my heart are before thee, O Lord; open them, and SAY UNTO MY SOUL, I AM THY SALVATION. May I run after this voice and apprehend thee. HIDE NOT THY FACE FROM ME. May I die,* that I may see it, lest I die indeed. My soul is a habitation too narrow for thy entrance; do thou enlarge it. It is in ruins; do thou repair it. It has what must offend thine eyes, I know and must confess: but who shall cleanse it? or to whom shall I cry but to thee? CLEANSE ME FROM MY SECRET FAULTS, AND KEEP ME FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS. I BELIEVE, AND THEREFORE SPEAK. O Lord, thou knowest:

pious presbyter of his diocese, afterwards bishop of Calama. Though poorly written, it yet deserves to be mentioned, as it confirms the authenticity of the historical parts of the *Confessions*. Augustine was born in the city of Tagasta in Numidia, of creditable parents. His father, Patricius, continued a Pagan till near his death; his mother, Monica, was renowned for Christian Piety. At the time of his full conversion to the Gospel he was upwards of thirty years of age.

POSSID. LIFE OF AUGUST.

* He seems to wish to undergo any mortification, even loss of life itself, rather than lose the enjoyment of his God.

Have I not confessed to thee my sins, and hast not then pardoned the iniquity of my heart? I will not contend in judgment with thee, who art truth itself: for I would not deceive myself. I will not contend in judgment with thee, for if thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who can stand?*

But, suffer me to speak, who am dust and ashes. Suffer me to speak, because I address thy mercy, and not the scornfulness of proud men. Perhaps thou deridest the simplicity of my thoughts, yet wilt thou turn and exercise compassion upon me. What else would I say, O Lord, my God, than that I know not whence I came hither into this,—shall I call it mortal life, or living death? Thy compassionate consolations supported me, and thou gavest me the nourishment of infancy.

Hear me, O God. Wo to the sins of mine! Then pitiest him, because thou madest him, and madest not sin in him. Who shall inform me of the sin of my infancy? For none is clear from sin in thy sight, not even the infant, whose life is only one day. Could it be right in me to solicit with tears, what it would be useless to resolve; to express vehement indignation against my parents and betters, if they did not comply with my will; and to endeavour, though with feeble blows, to avenge myself upon them? The weakness of my infant limbs was innocent, not so the spirit of the infant. I have seen and observed an infant full of envy; pale with anger, he looked at his fellow-suckling with bitterness in his countenance. Since I was conceived in iniquity, and my mother nourished me in her womb in sin, where, Lord, where, or when was I innocent? But I pass by this whole time, no traces of which I recollect.

What miseries, Lord, did I experience, when I was directed, in the plan of my education, to obey my teachers, in order

that I might acquire that knowledge, which might be subservient to the attainment of false riches and honour? Yet, I sinned; O thou, who ordainest all things, except our sins; I sinned in rebellion against the orders of parents and masters. That literature which they wished me to acquire, with whatever intention, was yet capable of being applied to a good use. My disobedience arose not from the love of better things, but from the love of play, and from a fondness for games and shows. Behold these things with an eye of mercy, and deliver us who now call on thee; deliver also those who do not call on thee as yet, that they may call on thee, and experience thy deliverance!!

I had heard from childhood of the eternal life promised unto us through the humility of the Lord our God condescending to our pride. Thou sawest, when I was yet a boy, and seemed to be on the brink of death, through a sudden and violent pain of the stomach, with what eagerness I begged Christian baptism from the charity of my mother and of the church. My mother, who travailed in birth for my eternal salvation, was hastening to comply with my desires, that I might wash away my sins, confessing thee, O Lord Jesus; when I suddenly recovered my health. A relapse into presumptuous sin, after baptism, being judged more dangerous, and the prospect of life admitting too great a probability of such relapse, my baptism was still deferred. Thus did I at that time believe in Christ, my father being the only infidel in our family. My mother was zealous that thou shouldst be my Father, rather than he: and in this she was favoured with thy help: obedient as she was to her husband, according to thy command, in this point she prevailed over him. Was the delay of my baptism for my benefit? What is the cause, that we hear every where such sounds as these, **LET HIM DO WHAT HE WILL, HE IS NOT YET BAPTIZED.** How much better for me, had I been, in more early life, initiated into the fold of Christ!*

* It is obvious to observe, how a mind like Augustine's, altogether resting on grace, and free justification, is freed from the subtleties of self-justification in any part of his conduct; whereas, those who rest for salvation, in any degree on themselves, are ever tempted to exaggerate their sins.

† The serious reader will not be inclined to pass over, in levity, those striking proofs of the awful propensity of nature exerting itself antecedent to the growth of reason or the power of habit.

* The narrative before us may justly be called a history of the usual operations of the Spirit of God on his people. Convictions in early life, on remarkable occasions, are common among these, and usually wear away, as in the case of Augustine. The examples of Constantine and Constantius deferring their baptism, seems to have made the practice fashionable, not from any idea of the unlawfulness of infant baptism, but from the selfish and perilous

Yet, in childhood itself, though little dreaded by my mother, in comparison of the dangers of youth, I was indolent; and I improved in learning only through necessity. A false worldly ambition was the only motive laid before me by my teachers; but thou, who numberest the hairs of our heads, improvedst their error to my advantage, whilst thou justly punishedst the great sins of so young an offender by their corrections. The learning, which with no holy intention they taught me, was sanctified by thee, and my guilty laziness was scourged. So hast thou ordained, that a mind disordered by sin should be its own punishment.

But why I hated Greek literature, in which I was instructed when very young, I do not even yet sufficiently understand. For I was fond of Latin learning, not indeed the first rudiments, but those things which classical masters teach. To read and write, and learn arithmetic, would have been as severe drudgery to my spirit, as all the Greek literature. I lay this also to the account of my native depravity, which prefers the worse, and rejects the better. The uses of reading, writing, and arithmetic, are obvious; not so the study of the wanderings of Æneas, which I attended to while I forgot my own.—Of what use was it to deplore the self-murdering Dido, while yet I could bear unmoved the death of my own soul, alienated from thee during the course of these pursuits,—from thee, my God, my life. O thou light of my heart, and bread of my inward man, and true husband of my soul! I loved thee not. I committed fornication against thee, and (such the spirit of the world) I was applauded with “well done” on all sides, and I should have been ashamed to have been found otherwise disposed. Yet the friendship of the world is fornication against thee. This is the kind of literature, which has arrogated to itself the name of polite and liberal. Learning, of real utility, is looked on as low and vulgar. Thus, in my childhood did I sin by a vicious preference. Two and two make four, was to me an odious sing-song; but the wooden horse, the burning of Troy, and the ghost of Creusa, were most enchanting specta-

cles of vanity. Yet why did I hate Greek literature, when employed in the same sort of objects? Homer is most agreeably trifling; to me, however, when a boy, he was by no means agreeable. I suppose Virgil would be the same to Greek youths, on account of the difficulties of learning a foreign language. Discipline is needful to overcome our puerile sloth, and this also is part of thy government of thy creatures, O God, for the purpose of restraining our sinful impetuosity. From the ferulas of masters to the trials of martyrs, thy wholesome severities may be traced, which tend to recal us to thee from that pernicious voluptuousness, by which we departed from thee.

Hear my prayer, O Lord, let not my soul faint under thy discipline, nor let me faint in confessing to thee thy mercies, by which thou hast delivered me from all my own evil ways; that thou mayest endear thyself to me, above all the blandishments which I was following, and that I may love thee most ardently, and embrace thy hand with all my heart, that thou mayest free me from all temptation, even to the end. O my King and my God, may whatever useful thing I learnt when a boy, serve thee; may what I speak and read and number, serve thee; because while I was learning vain things, thou gavest me thy discipline, and in those vain things forgavest the sins of my delights. For in them I learnt many useful words, though they might have been learned, abstracted from this connexion with vanity.

Alas! the torrent of human custom! who shall resist thee? How long will it be, ere thou be dried up? How long wilt thou roll the sons of Eve into a great and tempestuous sea, which even they, who have fled for refuge to the cross, can scarcely escape! Have not I read of Jove, at once the thunderer and the adulterer? What is this, but to teach men to call their crimes no crimes, while they have the sanction of gods whom they imitate? Terence introduces a prodigal young man justifying his lewdness by the example of Jove, while he beholds on the wall a picture of Jupiter and Danaë,* and excites himself to lust by divine tuition, SHALL HE, WHO SHAKES HEAVEN WITH HIS THUNDER, DO THESE THINGS; AND MAY NOT I, A POOR MORTAL, DO THE SAME? Yet I, my God, now indulged by

cious notions which he has stated. No wonder that he who justly thought that his own soul had suffered much by the delay, was afterwards a strenuous assertor of the expediency of more early baptism.

* Terence in Eunuch.

thy grace to behold thee in peace, learnt these things with pleasure, was delighted with them, and was called a boy of promising graces. The motives of praise and disgrace then spurred on my restless heart to literary exertions. What acclamations were made to a puerile exercise of mine on a particular occasion! Were not all these things smoke and wind? Was there not another way of exercising my talents,—in celebrating thy praise? But, what wonder, that I departed far from thee, my God, when men were proposed to me as objects of imitation, who would blush to be detected in barbarism or solecism, in reciting their own actions, though innocent; and at the same time might recite the story of their own lewdness, not only with impunity, but even with commendation, provided they did so with a copious and elegant flow of diction. O thou God of long-suffering, who permittest men thus to affront thee! Wilt thou not deliver from this horrible pit the soul that seeks thee, that thirsts after thy delights, and says, **THY FACE, LORD, WILL I SEEK!** It was by the darkness of libidinous affection that the prodigal son* went to a great distance from thee, his Father, gracious in bestowing on him thy gifts; and still more gracious to him when returning in indigence. How studiously exact are men in observing the rules of letters and syllables, while they neglect the rules of eternal salvation! They dwell on high, in inaccessible light, and scatterest penal blindness on unbridled lusts. A man shall seek the fame of eloquence, while, before the crowded audience, he guards against the least false pronunciation, and guards not at all against the fiercest malevolence of his own heart, raging against his fellow-creatures.

In this school did I wretchedly live. To please men was then to me the height of virtue, whilst I saw not the whirlpool of baseness in which I was cast from thine eyes. For what more filthy than I, all this time, deceiving by innumerable falsehoods both masters and parents, through the love of play and amusements! I even robbed the store-houses of my parents, either from the spirit of gluttony, or to bestow things agreeable to my play fellows. In my plays, I often sought to obtain fraudulent victories, overcome by the desire of vain excellence. Yet, what

should I dread so much to suffer, or be so ready to accuse, in another, if detected, as that very thing which I did to others; in which, however, if I myself was detected, I was more disposed to rage than to submit. Is this puerile innocence? far from it, O Lord. Change the scene only from pedagogues and masters, from nuts and balls, and sparrows, to prefects, kings, gold, and estates, and we see the vices of men, just as heavier punishments succeed to ferulas.

Still, O Lord, in my childhood I have much to praise thee for. Many, many were thy gifts; the sin was mine that I sought pleasure, truth, and happiness, not in thee, but in the creature, and thence rushed into pains, confusions, and errors. I thank thee, O my delight and confidence, for thy gifts; but do thou preserve them for me, and the things which thou hast given me shall be increased and perfected, and I shall be with thee, because thou hast given me to be so.*

BOOK II.

I AM willing to recollect the scenes of baseness and carnal corruption which I passed through in my youth, not that I may love them, but that I may love thee, my God. I do it from the love of thy love, recollecting my own very evil ways in the bitterness of memory, that thou mayest be endeared to me, O Delight that never deceives; Delight happy and secure; thou which collectest and bindest together the dispersed parts of my

* It is a very unjust surmise of Mr. Gibbon, to infer from Augustine's unwillingness to learn Greek, that he never attained the knowledge of that language, when he tells us, that he was doubtless a person of uncommon quickness of parts. His sloth and other vicious practices in childhood were, I suppose, such as are common to children. But few are disposed to look on them as serious evils. To Augustine's mind they appeared what they were, the marks of an apostate nature. Though, once the destruction of Pagan idolatry, there is by no means the same danger of reading classic authors, yet how justly blamable is the practice of leading boys so much to low poets, instead of acquainting them with the more solid excellencies of many prose authors? A just selection of the most innocent and useful authors, and a perpetual comparison of their sentiments with those of Christianity, will not only guard against the poison of the classics, but instruct youth in the necessity and importance of Revelation. School-masters, as well as children, may learn, in what we have seen, just matter of rebuke for exalting literary above moral excellence.

broken soul. While averse from thee, the only God, I vanished into a variety of vanities!* For in my youth I even burned to be satiated with forbidden pleasures, and became as rottenness in thy sight, while I pleased myself, and desired to please the eyes of men.

What was it that I delighted in, but to love and be beloved? But by the excess of passion, the serenity of affection was not distinguished from the darkness of lust. My tender years were hurried along through the whirlpool of flagitiousness. Thy displeasure was all the time embittering my soul, and I knew it not. The noise of my carnal chains, and the punishment of my pride, rendered me deaf to thy voice: I went far from thee, thou sufferedst it: I was tossed and agitated; and I overflowed with the ebullitions of lewdness, and thou wast silent, O my too tardy joy! At that time thou wast silent, and I wandered deeply from thee among many barren seeds of woes, in a state of proud degradation, and restless weariness. Thy omnipotence is not far from us, even when we are very far from thee; I might have heard thy voice, recommending a single life devoted to God, allowing indeed matrimony, and frowning on lewdness.† But I burst all legal bonds, yet escaped not thy scourges;—who of mortals can? For thou wast always present, severely merciful, mixing all my unlawful delights with bitter alarms, that I might seek for pleasure without alloy or obstacle, and not be able to find the possibility of this, but in thee; thee, I say, O Lord, who connectest pain with the breach of thy laws, who smitest that thou mayest heal, and slayest us that we may not die from thee. Where was I, and how long did I live in exile from thy house, in that sixteenth year of my age, when the madness of lust seized me altogether, and I willingly suffered the reins to fall from my hands? To the disgrace of our nature, this species of lust is every where tolerated, though forbidden by the laws.‡ My friends took no

pains to bridle me by the wholesome restraint of marriage; their anxiety was, that I should acquire the arts and graces of eloquence.

That year I had vacation from my studies, being returned from Madaura, a neighbouring city, where I had begun to learn oratory, to my father's house at Tagasta. He, with a spirit above his circumstances, for he was but a poor freeman of the town just mentioned, determined to send me to Carthage, that I might have the greatest advantages of proficiency. Why do I relate these things before thee, my God, to my fellow-creatures, the few of them, who may read these lines!—That both I and they may consider out of how great a depth it behoves us to cry to thee. And what is nearer than thine ears, if the heart confide in thee, and the life flow from faith? Who did not then extol the noble spirit of my father, laying out so much money on the education of his son; a spirit, so much superior to that of many much richer citizens, who had not the heart to send their sons to Carthage? While yet he had no concern in what manner I grew up to thee. Whether I was elate or not, cost him no thought, provided I was eloquent. In this year of vacation my passions were rampant without control. This pleased my father, who expressed his pleasure on the occasion to my mother. She had lately begun to feel thy holy love, and had been washed in the laver of regeneration. He was a catechumen in profession. Instantly, she conceived a pious trepidation on my account. My God, thou spakest to me by her, and warnedest me strongly against the ways of vice. Thy voice in her I despised, and thought it to be only the voice of a woman, which made not the least impression on my mind. So blinded was I, that I should have blushed to be thought less wicked than my companions, and even invented false stories of my sinful exploits, to obtain their commendation. My pious parent was prevented from encouraging me to marry, because she thought the usual studies, which I was now to enter upon, might be serviceable to promote in me the work of true religion. My father thought lit-

* The beautiful thought, thus diffusively expressed in our author's usual manner, is happily painted in a single word by the Psalmist, *INTE* my heart to fear thy name. Psalm lxxvi. 11.

† 1 Cor. vii.

‡ Would to God that this were not the case in Christian countries, as well as Pagan! If the reader feel himself inclined to treat with levity the serious manner in which juvenile vices are treated by the author, he will, when

better informed of the malignity of sin, condemn his own taste, not that of Augustine. The same contrast may be extended to the case of his theft, which follows.

tle of thee, but much of his son in vain expectations. Thus while they both were too anxious for my literary improvements, I made progress in vice, and shut myself up in the darkness of sin, so as to bar up, against myself, the admission of thy truth as much as possible.

Thy law certainly punishes theft, O Lord, and so does the LAW* WRITTEN in the hearts of men. For, what thief can bear another! Yet, compelled by no want, I deliberately committed theft; through the wantonness of iniquity and the contempt of justice. It was not the effect of the theft, but the sin itself, which I wished to enjoy. There was a pear-tree in the neighbourhood of my father's vineyard, loaded with fruit, though not of the most tempting kind. At dead of night, in company with some profligate youths, I plundered the tree: the spoil was principally thrown to the hogs; for I had abundance of better fruit at home. Behold my heart, my God, behold my heart, which thou hast pitied in its deep abyss of sin. What did I mean, that I should be gratuitously wicked? I loved destruction itself. In the common course of wickedness men have some end in view. Even Catiline himself loved not his crimes, but something else, for the sake of which he perpetrated them. We are deceived by appearances of good, embracing the shadows, while we follow our own lusts, instead of seeking the substance, which is only in thee. Thus, the soul commits fornication, when it is turned from thee, and seeks, out of thee, that pleasure, honour, power, wealth, or wisdom, which it never will find in its genuine purity, till it return to thee. All, who remove themselves far from thee, and set up themselves in opposition, perversely imitate some attribute of God, though even by such imitation they own thee to be the Creator of the universe. This is the general nature of sin. It descends by some fictitious shadow of that good, which in God alone is to be found. But what vicious or perverse imitation of my Lord was there in my theft? I can conceive none, unless it be the pleasure of acting arbitrarily and with impunity against law;—a dark shadow of Omnipotence. O rottenness! O monster of life, and profundity of death! Could I delight in what was not

lawful, merely because it was not lawful? What reward shall I give to the Lord, that I can now recollect these things without fear of damnation! I will love and bless thee, Lord, because thou hast pardoned such horrible evils, I impute it to thy grace that thou hast melted my sins as ice is melted. I impute also to thy grace my exemption from those evils which I have not committed. For of what was I not capable, who loved even gratuitous wickedness! I am sensible that all is forgiven; not only the evils which I have actually committed, but also those evils which by thy guidance I have been kept from committing. He who, called by thee, hath avoided the evils which he hears me confessing, should not deride me a poor patient healed by the Physician, since he himself is indebted to the same Benefactor for his health, or, to speak more properly, for his being afflicted with a less degree of sickness.

O the unsearchable seduction of pernicious friendship, the avidity of doing mischief from sport, the pleasure of making others suffer; and this without any distinct workings, either of avarice or of revenge! We hear others say, Let us go, let us do it, and we are ashamed to appear defective in impudences. Who can unfold to me the intricacies of this knot of wickedness? It is filthy, I will pry no more into it. I will not see it. Thee will I choose, O righteousness and innocence, light truly honourable, and satiety insatiable! With thee is perfect rest, and life without perturbation. He who enters into thee, enters into the joy of his Lord, and shall not fear, and shall be in the best situation in thee, the Best of Beings. I departed from thee; I erred and strayed, O my God, from thy firm and upright ways; and in my youth I became to myself a region of desolation.

BOOK III.

I CAME to Carthage surrounded and agitated with flagitious lusts. After thee, O my God, the true bread of life, I hungered not; and though famished with real indigence, and longing after that which soursbeth not, I had no desire for incorruptible food, not because I was full of it, for the more empty I was, the more fastidious I grow. My sordid passions, however, were gilded over with the decent and plausible appearances of love and friendship. Foul and base as I was, I affected the reputation of liberal and

* He means the voice of natural conscience. See *Romans*, ch. ii. ver. 15.

polite humanity. I rushed into the lusts with which I desired to be captivated. My God, my mercy, with how great bitterness didst thou, in thy extraordinary kindness, mix those vain allurements by which I was miserably enslaved and beaten! for beaten I truly was with all the iron rods of envy, suspicion, fear, indignation, and quarrelling. The spectacle of the theatre, in particular, now hurried me away, full of the images of my miseries, and the fomentations of my fire.

The arts of the Forum also engaged my ambition; the more fraudulent the more laudable. Pride and arrogance now elated my soul, though I was far from approving the frantic proceedings of the men called *EVERSORES*, who made a practice of disturbing modest pleaders, and confounding their minds by riots. Amidst those things, in that imbecility of judgment which attends youth, I studied the books of eloquence with the most ardent desire of vain-glory, and in the course of my reading dipped into the *Hortensius* of Cicero, which contains an exhortation to the study of philosophy. This book was the instrument of effecting a remarkable change in my views. I suddenly gave up the fantastic hope of reputation by eloquence, and felt a most ardent thirst after wisdom. In the mean time, I was maintained at Carthage at my mother's expense, being in the nineteenth year of my age, my father having died two years before. How did I long, my God, to fly from earthly things to thee, and yet I know not what thou wert doing with me. At that time, O light of my heart, though I was unacquainted with the apostolical admonition, TAKE HEED, LEST ANY MAN SPOIL YOU THROUGH PHILOSOPHY AND VAIN DECEIT;* thou knowest what was the sole object of my delight in the Ciceronian volume, namely, that I was vehemently excited by it to seek for wisdom, not in this or that sect, but wherever it was to be found. And the only thing which damped my zeal was, that the name of Christ, that precious name, which from my mother's milk I had learned to reverence, was not there. And, whatever was without this name, however just, and learned, and polite, could not wholly carry away my heart. I determined therefore to apply my mind to the Holy Scriptures, to see what they were; and I now see the whole subject was im-

penetrable to the proud, low in appearance, sublime in operation, and veiled with mysteries; and my frame of heart was such as to exclude me from it, nor could I stoop to take its yoke upon me. I had not these sensations when I attended to the Scriptures, but they appeared to me unworthy to be compared with the dignity of Cicero. My pride was disgusted with their manner, and my penetration could not enter into their meaning.* It is true, those who are content to be little children, find by degrees an illumination of their souls; but I disdained to be a child, and elated with pride imagined myself to be possessed of manly wisdom.

In this situation I fell in with the Manichees, men who had in their mouths the mere sound of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and were always talking of THE TRUTH, THE TRUTH, and yet formed the most absurd opinions of the works of nature, on which subjects the heathen philosophers far excelled them. O truth, how eagerly did I pant after thee, while they only used the word with their mouths, or repeated it in many huge volumes! But they taught me to look for my God in the Sun and Moon, and also in a number of splendid phantasms of their own creation.† I endeavoured to feed on these vanities, but they being not my God, though I then supposed so, I was not nourished, but exhausted. How far did I wander then from thee! exclud-

* An excellent description of the usual effect of a little Scriptural study on a proud mind, which, by the just judgment of God, is given up to judicial infatuation and specious delusion, in some way or other.

† The Manichees, so called from Manes their founder, had existed about a hundred years. It would not be worth while to notice them at all, were it not for their connexion with the life of Augustine. Like most of the ancient heretics, they abounded in senseless whims, not worthy of any solicitous explanation. This they had in common with the Pagan Philosophers, that they supposed the supreme Being to be material, and to penetrate all nature. Their grand peculiarity was to admit of two independent principles, a good and an evil one, in order to solve the arduous question concerning the origin of evil. Like all heretics, they made a great parade of seeking truth with liberal impartiality, and were thus qualified to deceive unwary spirits, who, far from suspecting their own imbecility of judgment, and regardless of the word of God, and hearty prayer, have no idea of attaining religious knowledge by any other method than by natural reason.

ed, even FROM THE HUSKS WHICH THE SWINE DID EAT! For the fables of the poets, which I did not believe, though I was entertained with them, were preferable to the absurdities of these lovers of truth. Alas! alas! by what steps was I led into Satanic depths! Panting after truth, I sought thee, my God, not in intellectual, but in carnal speculations; for I would confess all to thee, who didst compassionate my misery, even while I was hardened against thee. The Manichees seduced me, partly with their subtle and captious questions concerning the origin of evil, partly with their blasphemies against the Old Testament Saints.* I did not then understand, that though the divine rule of right and wrong is immutable in the abstract, and the love of God and our neighbour is always indisputably necessary, yet that there were particular acts of duty adapted to the times and seasons and circumstances in which they were placed, which abstracted from such consideration would be unlawful. In much ignorance I at that time derided thy holy servants, and was justly exposed to believe most ridiculous absurdities. And thou sentest thy hand from above, and freedst me from this depth of evil, while my mother was praying for me, more solicitous on account of the death of my soul, than other parents for the death of the body. She was favoured with a dream, by which thou comfortedst her soul with hope of my recovery. She appeared to herself to be standing on a plank, and a person came to her and asked her the cause of her affliction; and on being answered, that it was on my account, he charged her to be of good cheer, for that where she was, there also I should be. On which she immediately beheld me standing by her on the same plank. Whence was this but from thee, gracious Omnipotent, who takest care of each and all of us, as of single persons! When she related this to me, I endeavoured to evade the force of it, by observing, that it might mean to exhort her to be what I was. Without hesitation she replied, it was not said, where he is, there thou

shalt be; but, where thou art, there he shall be. Her prompt answer made a stronger impression on my mind than the dream itself. For nine years, while I was rolling in the filth of sin, often attempting to rise, and still sinking deeper, did she in vigorous hope persist in incessant prayer. I remember, also, that she entreated a certain bishop to undertake to reason me out of my errors. He was a person not backward to attempt this, where he found a docile subject. "But your son," says he, "is too much elated at present, and carried away with the pleasing novelty of his error, to regard any arguments, as appears by the pleasure he takes in puzzling many ignorant persons with his captious questions. Let him alone; only continue praying to the Lord for him; he will in the course of his study discover his error. I myself, perverted by my mother, was once a Manichee and read almost all their books, and yet at length was convinced of my error, without the help of any disputant." All this satisfied not my anxious parent; with floods of tears she persisted in her request; when at last he a little out of temper on account of her importunity, said, "Begone, good woman; it is not possible that the child of such tears should perish." She has often told me since, that this answer impressed her mind like a voice from Heaven.

BOOK IV.

For the space of nine years, namely, from the nineteenth to the twenty-eighth year of my age, I lived deceived and deceiving others, seducing men into various lusts, openly by what are called the liberal arts, and secretly by a false religion; in the former proud, in the latter superstitious; in all things seeking vain glory, even to theatrical applauses and contentious contests; and to complete the dismal picture, a slave to the lusts of the flesh. So infatuated was I with the Manichean follies, that I drew my friends into them, and with them practised the impieties of the sect. The arrogant may despise me, and all who have never felt a salutary work of self-humiliation from thee, my God. But I would confess to thee my own disgrace, for thy glory. What am I, left to myself, but a guide rashly conducting others to a precipice! And when I am in a better state, what am I, but an infant feeding upon thee, the bread that perisheth not! What is

*The Manichees objected to the characters of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, David, &c. on account of various actions allowed under the dispensation of their times, but forbidden under the New Testament, and thence formed an argument against the Divinity of the Old Testament.

any man, since he is flesh! Let the proud and the strong despise us; but we who are weak and poor would confess to thee.

At this time I maintained myself by teaching rhetoric; and without fraud I taught my scholars, not how to oppress the innocent, but sometimes how to vindicate the guilty. I lived also with one woman, but without matrimony. At this time I ceased not also to consult astrologers; nor could I be induced by the arguments of a very sensible physician, nor by the admonitions of my excellent friend Nebridius, to reject these follies.

While I was teaching rhetoric in this manner in my native town, I enjoyed the friendship of a young man of my own age, a school-fellow and companion from infancy. Indeed there is no true friendship, except thou cement it among those who cleave to thee, through the love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given to us. But it was a friendship too sweet, inflamed by the fervour of similar studies. For I had drawn him aside from the true faith, which he held not in a deep and genuine manner, into the Manichean follies, on account of which my mother bewailed me. And lo! thou who pursuest thy fugitives, O God of vengeance and source of mercies, and convertest us to thyself by wonderful methods, lo! thou removedst him from this life, when I had scarcely enjoyed his friendship a year after my return to Tagasta. While he lay a long time senseless in a fever, and his life was despaired of, he was baptized without his own knowledge; a thing which I regarded with great indifference, as not doubting but he would retain my instructions which had been instilled into his mind, rather than that which had been applied to his body, when he was ignorant of the matter. However, against all expectation he recovered. As soon as I had an opportunity of conversing with him, I attempted to turn into ridicule his late baptism, in which I expected his concurrence. But he dreaded me as an enemy, and with wonderful freedom suddenly admonished me, that if I would be his friend, I should drop the subject. Confounded at this unexpected behaviour, I deferred the conversation, till he should be thoroughly recovered. But he was removed from my madness, that he might be saved with thee, my God, and that I might have comfort afterwards in reflecting on his salva-

tion. In a few days the fever returned, and he died. How miserable was my life! My country was a punishment, my father's house a wonderful infelicity, and whatever I had enjoyed in common with him, without him was torment itself. I found I could now no longer say, He will come shortly, as I was wont to do. If I said, Hope in God, my soul refused; for the man whom I had lost was an object preferable to the phantasm,* on which I was bid to fix my hopes. Weeping alone was sweet to me, and supplied the absence of my friend.

Wretched I now was, and wretched is every soul that is bound by the friendship of mortal things. Behold my heart, my God, my hope, who cleansest me from the contagion of such affections, and directest my eyes to thee, and pluckest my feet out of the net. O madness! not knowing how to love men as men.—O foolish man! bearing with no moderation the lot of humanity. The load of misery burdened me, which I knew thou alone couldst cure; but I was unwilling and impotent, because when I thought of thee, I had only a shadowy idol before me. If I attempted to throw my burden on thee, it returned upon myself, as I found nothing that would support it. I fled however from my country, and came to Carthage.

Time, other objects, and other friendships, gradually lessened my sorrow. But happy is he who loves thee, and his friend in thee, and his enemy for thy sake. For he only loses no friend to whom all are dear in him who is never lost; and who is he but our God, who made and fills heaven and earth. None loses thee but he who lets thee go; and he who dismisses thee, whither does he fly, but from the PROPITIOUS to the ADVERSE? God of power! turn us, and show thy face, and we shall be saved. For, wherever the soul of man turns itself, it fixes upon sorrow, except in thee. Be not vain, my soul, and make not the ear of thy heart deaf with the tumult of vanity. The word itself calls to thee to return; there is the place of rest not to be disturbed. There with God fix thy mansion; there entrust whatever thou hast, my soul, when fatigued with vanities. If souls please thee, love them in God, and carry them with thee to him as many as thou

* He means the fantastic idea of God, which is a Manichee he had embraced.

canst, and say to them, let us love him, he made these things, and he is not far off. The good ye love is from him, but it will deservedly be bitter, if ye love it to excess, deserting him. Ye seek a happy life: he who is our life descended hither and destroyed death. After his descent, will ye not ascend and live! But why ascend, since ye are too high already? Come down, that ye may ascend to God. For by rising up against him ye have fallen. Tell your friends these things, that they may weep; and so take them with thee to God, if indeed thou sayest these things from his Spirit, and if indeed the fire of his love burn in thee.

I made approaches to thee, O Lord, and thou repelldest me, because thou retestest the proud; and what was prouder, than to assert that I was naturally what thou art? Alas! of what avail was it that I understood the logic of Aristotle, and what are called the liberal arts! I had, it is true, a facility of comprehension, and an acuteness in argumentation, thy gift; but I sacrificed not thence to thee. Hence they were to me a curse, and not a blessing. Yet, all this time, I looked on thee as an immense lucid body, of which I myself was a fragment. How much better was it with thy children of more tardy genius, who did not recede from thy nest, but were fledged and grew up in safety in thy Church, and nourished the wings of love with the food of sound faith! O Lord our God, let us trust in the shadow of thy wings. "Do thou carry us to heavenly heights." When thou art our strength, we have strength; our own is weakness.

BOOK V.

Receive the sacrifice of my confessions, and heal all my bones, that they may say, Lord, who is like unto thee! The heart that is shut against thee excludes not thine eye, nor does the hardness of men's hearts repel thine hand, but thou softenest them when thou pleasest, in compassion or in vengeance, and none can hide himself from thy flame. But may my soul praise thee, that it may love thee, and may it acknowledge thy compas-

sions, that it may praise thee! Let men be converted and seek thee; and behold, thou art in the heart of those who confess to thee, and cast themselves upon thee, and in thy bosom deplore their evil ways; and thou in mercy wilt wipe away their tears, that they may weep the more, and rejoice in tears, because thou, Lord, refreshest and comfortest them.

In the sight of my God I will give an account of the twenty-ninth year of my age. A Manichee bishop, named Faustus, had now come to Carthage, a great snare of the devil, and many were enchanted by his eloquence, which though I could not but commend, I yet distinguished from truth. Report had represented him as a very liberal and accomplished scholar. And as I had read many things of the philosophers, I compared them with the tedious fables of the Manichees, and found the former more probable. Thou regardest, Lord, the humble; the proud thou beholdest afar off. No doubt the foretelling of eclipses, and other things that might be mentioned, demonstrate the truth of the philosophical sciences in secular things. Unhappy is that man who knows all these things and knows not Thee; but blessed is he who knows thee, though he knows not these things. But he who knows both thee and them, is not happier on their account, but on account of thee alone is happy, if knowing thee he glorify thee as God, and be thankful, and be not vain in his imaginations. For, as he is in a better situation, who possesseth a tree, and is thankful to thee for the use of it, though he knows neither its height nor breadth, than he who measures it, and counts all its branches, and neither possesses it, nor knows nor has learned his Creator; so the believer, whose property all the riches of the world are, and who HAVING NOTHING, YET POSSESSETH ALL THINGS, by cleaving to thee whom all things serve, is indisputably better than the most knowing natural philosopher upon earth, who lives in the neglect of thee.*

Yet the rashness of the Manichee writer, who undertook to write of Astronomy, though completely ignorant of the science, is inexcusable, especially as he contended

* In this blasphemy the Manichees followed the Pagan philosophers. They had no idea, also, that God was a spirit. Hence our Author's long conflict, before he could form a spiritual idea of God.

† Isaiah xlv. 4.

* An excellent comparison between the state of an illiterate believer, who feeds on Christ by faith, and that of an accomplished man of science, even of one skilled in speculative theology among other branches of knowledge, but destitute of spiritual life.

that the Holy Ghost resided personally in him. The ignorance of a believer in such subjects is very excusable; even if he fancy his mistaken notions in natural philosophy to be branches of religion. But who can bear to hear a pretender to infallible inspiration vending absurdities on the works of nature! Here then I had my doubts concerning the divinity of Manicheism, and in vain proposed them to those of the sect whom I met with. "You must wait till the all-accomplished Faustus come to Carthage," was all the answer I received. On his arrival I found him an agreeable speaker, and one who could deliver their dotages in a more persuasive tone. But by this time I was surfeited with these subjects, and I had been taught by thee, my God, who hast instructed me marvellously, but secretly, that style and manner, however excellent, were not the same thing as sound argument. The address, indeed, the pathos, the propriety of language, and facility of expression in clothing his sentiments, delighted me; but my mind was unsatisfied. The proofs of ignorance in science which I saw in Manicheism, connected with pretensions to infallibility, staggered my mind with respect to their whole system. On freely conversing with him, I found him possessed of an ingenuous frankness, more valuable than all the subjects of my investigation. He owned his ignorance in all philosophy, and left me convinced of it. Grammar alone, and some Ciceroian and other classical furniture, made up his stock of knowledge, and supplied him with a copiousness of diction, which received additional ornament from his natural vivacity of imagination. My hope of discovering truth was now at an end: I remained still a Manichee, because I despaired of succeeding better on any other plan. Thus that same Faustus, who had been the snare of death to many, was the first who relaxed my fetters, though contrary to his own intention. Thy hands, my God, in the secret of thy providence, forsook not my soul: day and night the prayers of my mother came up before thee, and thou wroughtest upon me in ways marvellous indeed, but secret. Thou didst it, my God: FOR MAN'S GOINGS ARE FROM THE LORD: and who affords salvation but thy hand, which restores what thou hast made! It was from thy influence that I was persuaded to go to Rome to teach, instead of Carthage. The deep recesses of thy wisdom and mercy

must be confessed by me in this dispensation. I understood, that at Rome a teacher was not exposed to those turbulent proceedings, which were so common at Carthage. Thus the madness of one set of men, and the friendship of others, promising me vain things, were thy means of introducing me into the way of life and peace, and in secret thou madest use of their perverseness and my own. Here I detested real misery, there sought false felicity. But the true cause of this removal was at that time hidden both from me and my mother, who bewailed me going away, and followed me to the sea-side; but I deceived her, though she held me close with a view either to call me back, or to go along with me. I pretended that I only meant to keep company with a friend till he set sail; and with difficulty persuaded her to remain that night in a place dedicated to the memory of Cyprian. But that night I departed privately; and she continued weeping and praying. Thus did I deceive my mother, and such a mother! Yet was I preserved from the dangers of the sea, foul as I was in all the mire of sin, and a time was coming, when thou wouldest wipe away my mother's tears, with which she watered the earth, and even forgive this my base undutifulness. And what did she beg of thee, my God, at that time, but that I might be hindered from sailing? Thou, in profound wisdom regarding the issue of her desire, neglectedst the particular object of her present prayers, that thou mightest gratify the general object of her devotions. The wind favoured us, and carried us out of sight of the shore when in the morning she was distracted with grief, and filled thine ears with groans and complaints; whilst thou, in contempt of her violent agonies, hurriedst me along by my lusts to complete their desires, and punishedst her carnal desire with the just scourge of immoderate griefs.* She loved my presence with her, as is natural to mothers, though in her the affection was uncommonly strong, and she knew not what joy thou wast preparing for her from my absence. She knew not; therefore she wept and wailed. Yet after she had

* It requires a mind well seasoned with Christian discernment and humility, to admire in all this the Providence of God working good out of evil; to separate what is truly holy and humble in the affections of our author's mother, from what was really carnal and earthly; and hence to discover the justness of his reflections.

wearied herself in accusing my perfidy and cruelty, she returned to her former employment of praying for me, and went home, while I went to Rome.

And there I was punished with the scourge of bodily sickness, and I drew nigh to hell, carrying the load of all my sins, original and actual. For Christ had not freed me from them by the body of his flesh through death. For how could a fantastic death, such as I, a Manichee, then believed his to be, deliver my soul! Whether must I have gone, had I at that time departed hence, but to the fire and torments worthy of my deeds, according to the truth of thy appointment! She was ignorant of this, and yet prayed for me, being absent. But thou, every where present, heardest her, and pitiedst me. Still in the crisis of my danger, I desired not thy baptism as I had done when a boy; I had grown up to my own disgrace, and mostly derided thy medicine of human misery. How my mother, whose affection both natural and spiritual toward me was inexpressible, would have borne such a stroke, I cannot conceive. Morning and evening she frequented the church, to hear thy word and to pray, and the salvation of her son was the constant burden of her supplications. Thou heardest her, O Lord, and performedst in due season what thou hadst predestinated. Thou recoveredst me from the fever, that at length I might obtain also a recovery of still greater importance.

The Manichees are divided into two bodies, auditors, and elect. He, in whose house I lodged, was of the former sort. I myself was ranked among the latter. With them I fancied myself perfectly sinless, and laid the blame of the evils I committed on another nature, that stained within me, and my pride was highly gratified with the conception. My attachment to this sect, however, grew more lax, as I found the impossibility of discovering truth, and felt a secret predilection in favour of the academic philosophy, which commends a state of doubt and uncertainty. My landlord, who had not so much

experience of the sect as I had, was elevated with their fancies. I checked his sanguine views; and though the intimacy I had contracted with this people (for a number of them live at Rome) made me backward to seek elsewhere for truth, I was however little solicitous to defend the reputation of their tenets. It was a deplorable evil with me, that my prejudice was so strong against the Christian faith. When I thought of thee, my God, I could not conceive any thing but what was corporeal, though of the most excellent subtilty; but what was immaterial, appeared to be nothing. And here I seemed incurable in error. I did not conceive it possible, that a good Being should create an evil one, and therefore chose to admit limits to the infinite Author of Nature, by supposing him to be controlled by an independent evil principle. Yet, though my ideas were material, I could not bear to think of God being flesh. That was too gross and low in my apprehensions. Thy only begotten Son appeared to me as the most lucid part of thee, afforded for our salvation. I concluded, that such a nature could not be born of the Virgin Mary without partaking of human flesh, which I thought must pollute it. Hence arose my fantastic ideas of Jesus,* so destructive of all piety. Thy spiritual children may smile at me with charitable sympathy, if they read these my confessions; such, however, were my views. Indeed, while I was at Carthage the discourse of one Heliadius had moved me in some degree, who produced from the New Testament several powerful arguments against their positions; and their answer appeared to me to be weak, which yet they did not deliver openly, but in secret. They pretended that the Scriptures of the New Testament had been falsified by some, who desired to insert Judaism into Christianity, but they themselves produced no

* Does the reader think this harsh! Let him consider whether it can be any thing else than the worst of a torn belief of the word of God and a contempt of his holiness and authority, that can make him think so, and he will do well to apply this awful case to his own consciousness.

† Every human soul was opposed by the Manichees to have in it a mixture of the good and the evil principle.

‡ A very natural and common effect of rea-

soning pride. When a man attempts to discover and adjust religious truth by leaning to his own understanding, he frequently finds scepticism the sole result of his most painful investigations; and every thing appears doubtful to him, except the incompetency of fallen man to understand these things, and the propriety of seeking a new nature and a spiritual understanding from above. If the errors of Manicheism appear very absurd, there are other modes of deviation from Scripture truth, which would appear no less so, were they as unobscurable in our times.

* It is evident that this sect comprehended in it the fundamental errors of the Docetes, of whom we have spoken repeatedly.

uncorrupted copies.* Still did I pant under those masses of materialism, and was prevented from breathing the simple and pure air of thy truth.

Some unexpected disadvantages in the way of my profession laid me open to any probable offer of employ in other parts of Italy. From Milan, a requisition was made to Symmachus, prefect of Rome, to send a professor of rhetoric to that city. By the interest of my Manichean friends I obtained the honour, and came to Milan. There I waited on Ambrose the Bishop, a man renowned for piety through the world, and who then ministered the bread of life to thy people with much zeal and eloquence. The man of God received me like a father, and I conceived an affection for him, not as a teacher of truth, which I had no idea of discovering in thy Church, but as a man kind to me; and I studiously attended his lectures, only with a curious desire of discovering whether fame had done justice to his eloquence or not. I stood indifferent and fastidious with respect to his matter, and at the same time was delighted with the sweetness of his language, more learned indeed, but less soothing and agreeable than that of Faustus. In their thoughts there was no comparison; the latter erred in Manichean fallacies, the former taught salvation in the most salutary manner. But salvation is far from sinners, such as I then was, and yet I was gradually approaching to it, and knew it not. As I now despaired of finding the way to God, I had no concern with sentiment; language alone I chose to regard. But the ideas which I neglected came into my mind, together with the words with which I was pleased. I gradually was brought to attend to the doctrine of the bishop. I found reason to rebuke myself for the hasty conclusions I had formed of the perfectly indefensible nature of the law and the prophets. A number of difficulties, start-

ed upon them by the Manichees, found in the expositions of Ambrose a satisfactory solution. The possibility of finding truth in the Church of Christ appeared; and I began to consider by what arguments I might convict Manichæism of falsehood. Could I have formed an idea of a spiritual substance, their whole fabric had been overturned, but I could not. Moreover, I found that the philosophers in general explained the system of nature better than the Manichees. It seemed shameful to continue in connexion with a sect replete with such evident absurdities, that I could not but prefer to them the Pagan philosophers, though I dared not trust these with the healing of my soul, because they were without the saving name of Christ. In conclusion, I determined to remain a catechumen in the church recommended to me by my parents, till I saw my way more clearly.

BOOK VI.

O Thou! my hope from my youth, where wast thou? Thou madest me wiser than the fowls of heaven; yet I walked through darkness and slippery places. My mother was now come to me, courageous through piety, following me by land and sea, and secure of thy favour in all dangers. She found me very hopeless with respect to the discovery of truth. However, when I told her my present situation, she answered, that she believed in Christ, that before she left this world she should see me a sound believer. To thee her prayers and tears were still more copious, that thou wouldest perfect what thou hadst begun, and with much zeal and affection she attended the ministry of Ambrose. Him she loved as an angel of God, because she understood that I had broken off from Manichean connexions through his means, and she confidently expected me to pass from sickness to health, though with a critical danger in the interval.

She had been used to bring bread and wine for the commemoration of the saints; and still retaining the African custom, she was prohibited by the door-keeper, understanding that the bishop had forbidden the practice. Another person would not soon have been obeyed, but Ambrose was her favourite, and was himself amazed at the promptitude of her obedience. The reasons of the prohibition were, the fear of excess, and the danger of superstition, the practice itself being

* The Manichees, like all other heretics, could not stand before the Scriptures. They professedly rejected the Old Testament, as belonging to the malignant principle; and when they were pressed with the authority of the New, as corroborating the Old, they pretended the New was adulterated. Is there any new thing under the sun? Did not Lord Bolingbroke set up the authority of St. John against St. Paul? Have we not heard of some parts of the Gospels as not genuine, because they suit not Socinian views? Genuine Christian principles alone will bear the test, nor fear the scrutiny of the whole word of God.

very similar to those of the Pagana.* Instead therefore of a canister full of the fruits of the earth, she henceforward, on the commemoration-days of the martyrs, gave alms, according to her ability, to the poor, and received the Lord's Supper, if it was celebrated on those occasions. Ambrose himself was charmed with the fervour of her piety and the amiableness of her good works, and often brake out in his preaching, when he saw me, congratulating me that I had such a mother, little knowing what sort of a son she had, who doubted of all these things, and even apprehended that the way of life could not be found. Nor did I groan to thee in prayer for help, being intent only on study, and restless in discussions and investigations. In a secular view, Ambrose himself appeared to be a happy man, revered as he was by the imperial court; only his celibacy appeared to me in a melancholy light. But what hope he bore within, what struggles he had against the temptations of grandeur, what was his real comfort in adversity, his hidden strength and joy derived from the bread of Life, of these things I could form no idea; for I had no experience of them; nor did he know the fluctuations of my soul, nor the dangerous pit in which I was enslaved. It was out of my power to consult him as I could wish, surrounded as he was with crowds of persons, whose necessities he relieved. During the little time in which he was from them, (and the time was but little) he either refreshed his body with food, or his mind with reading. Hence I had no opportunity to unbosom myself to him. A few words of conversation sufficed not. I expected in vain to find him at leisure for a long conversation.† I profited, however, by his sermons. Every Lord's day I heard him instructing the people, and I was more and more convinced of the falsity of the calumnies which those deceivers had invented against the divine books. And when I found, that the Monastic expression of man made after the image of God, was understood by no be-

liever to imply that God was in human form, though I still could form no idea of a spiritual substance, I was glad, and blushed to think how many years I had falsely accused the Church, instead of learning by careful inquiry.*

The state of my mind was now something altered; ashamed of past miscarriages and delusions, and hence the more anxious to be guided right for the time to come. I was completely convinced of the falsehood of the many things I had once uttered with so much confidence. I was pleased to find, that the Church of Christ was plainly free from the monstrous absurdity of which I had accused her. I found, too, that thy holy men of old held not those sentiments with which they were charged. And I was pleased to find Ambrose very diligently commending a rule to his people, "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life;"† when the bishop, removing the mystic veil, opened to us those things, which according to the letter might seem to teach perverseness: what he said was agreeable to me, though I was far from being convinced of its truth.‡ My former mistakes and blameable rashness rendered me now exceedingly sceptical, and I wanted the fullest intuitive evidence. By faith, indeed, I might have been healed; but having experienced a bad physician, I now dreaded a good one. By believing alone could I be cured; yet for fear of believing false things, I refused to be healed, resisting thy hands, who hast made for us the medicines of faith, and hast sprinkled them over the diseases of the world, and hast attributed so great authority to them.

I could not, however, but prefer the general doctrine of the church, and think

* A remarkable instance of partiality, attended with a remarkable frankness of confession. Augustine for nine years believed that the general church held the corporeal form of the Supreme Being, though he might with ease have learned the contrary at any time. But heresy in all ages acts in the same disingenuous spirit.

† An important observation surely! abused much by Origen, and many of his followers, to foment and exasperate passions. In Augustine, however, the distinction between letter and spirit was generally made commensurate with that between flesh and spirit, and in effect distinguished self-righteousness from evangelical religion.

‡ It would be well, if many, who stumble at the Old Testament, were more convinced of their own ignorance and incompetency, for want of a just and solid acquaintance with its typical nature, and the laws of interpreting it.

* Here is a striking instance of the growth of Pagan superstitions in the church. The incense was strong, and notwithstanding occasional churches which it received at length overspread all Christendom, and quite obscured the light of the Gospel.

† Doubtless, could the modesty of Augustine have prevailed on him to desire such a conference, he might have obtained it. And what a bishop then was, may be seen in Ambrose.

it was more reasonable to enjoin faith in subjects incapable of demonstration, than to require the belief of most absurd fables after pretending to promise us knowledge.

By degrees, thou, Lord, with a mild and merciful hand regulating and composing my heart, enabledst me to consider how many things I believed which I had never seen, what credit I gave to friends, to physicians, to many others, without which the common affairs of life could never be transacted; also, how firmly I believed who were my parents, though I could not possibly have any demonstration concerning the matter. Thus thou persuadest me, that those who believed thy books were not to be condemned for credulity, but those who disbelieved them were to be condemned for unreasonable obstinacy, especially as their credibility was established by the great authority which they had obtained throughout the world. "How do you know that those books were divinely inspired?" appeared to me now a question implying a doubt not worthy to be attended to. For, amidst all the contentiousness of philosophers, which had so much agitated my mind, I had ever preserved the belief of thy existence and Divine providence. Sometimes, indeed, this belief was stronger, sometimes weaker, yet it never left me, notwithstanding my great perplexity concerning thy nature, or the way of approaching thee. As we are too infirm to discover truth by abstract reasoning, and therefore need the authority of divine revelation, I apprehended, that thou wouldest never have given such high authority and influence to the Scriptures through the world, unless this had been the appointed means of our knowing thee, and seeking thy will; and now the absurdities, which the literal interpretation of many things seem to involve, after I had heard a probable exposition of several of them, I referred to the depth of mysteries; and hence the authority of thy book appeared more venerable and more credible, as it lay open to every one's view, and yet reserved the dignity of the secret by the most profound sentiments; offering themselves to all in a language the most open and the most humble, and exercising the attention of serious minds. I considered these things, and thou wast present with me; I sighed, and thou hearest me; I fluctuated, and thou directedst my course; I went along the broad way

of the world, and thou didst not desert me.*

My heart was thirsting after honours, profits, and marriage, and thou deridest me. In these lusts I suffered the bitterest difficulties; then being so much the more propitious, the less thou sufferedst any thing to be pleasant to me which was not thyself. See, Lord, my heart. Now let it stick close to thee, which thou hast freed from the tenacious glue of death. How miserable was I, and how didst thou cause me to feel my misery on that day, when I was preparing to excite a panegyric to the emperor, in which there were many falsehoods, and I expected applause, even from those who knew them to be falsehoods, when my heart brooded over its anxieties, and passing through a certain street of Milan, I saw a poor beggar, I suppose at that time with a full belly, jocund and merry! I sighed, and spake to my friends who were with me, of the many pains of our madness, because from all the toils, which with so much labour and vexation we underwent, we expected only that same rest and security, which that beggar had already attained, though we were uncertain whether we should ever reach it. In truth, he was not possessed of true joy, but I, by the ambiguous windings of art, sought it in a more delusory way. He, however, was evidently merry, I full of anxiety; he at his ease, I full of fear. Were I asked, whether frame of mind I should prefer, I should without hesitation choose his. Yet if I were asked, whether I would be Augustine, or the beggar, I should say the former. How perverse was this! Much to this purpose did I say to my friends, and often observed

* We have seen here the close thoughts of an original thinker, who had once as strong a prejudice as any against Scripture-truth; owning his rashness in condemning what he had not understood; convinced of the rationality of the Scriptures, after he had in some measure discovered the true key to their meaning; persuaded of their divinity, from their providential propagation in the world; owning the unreasonableness of expecting demonstration, and of refusing assent to grounds of faith such as determine us in common life; spying a divine beauty in the plainness and simplicity of their language, adapted to all capacities; and comprehending at length the necessity of a serious mind, in order to render them effectual to saving purposes.—Sceptics and infidels would do well to follow him in this train of thought: they need not to be ashamed to imitate a person so acute and ingenuous.

how things were with me; and I found myself miserable, and I grieved, and doubted that misery. And if any thing prosperous smiled upon me, I was backward to lay hold of it, because it flew away almost before I could lay hold of it.*

My most intimate conversations on these subjects were with Alypius and Nebridius. The former, my townsman, had studied under me both at Tagasta and at Carthage, and we were very dear to each other. The torrent of fashion at the latter place hurried him into the Circensian games, of which he became extravagantly fond. I was vexed to see him give into a taste so destructive of all sobriety and prudence in youth, and cannot but take notice of the providential manner in which he was delivered. While I was one day expounding in my school at Carthage, an allusion to the Circensian games occurred as proper to illustrate my subject, on which occasion I severely censured those who were fond of that madness. I meant nothing for Alypius; but then, Lord, who hadst designed him for a minister of thy word, and who wouldest make it manifest, that his correction should be by thy own work, inflicted a deep sting of conviction into his heart; he believed, that I spake it on his account, loved me the more for it, and shook off the Circensian follies. But he was afterwards involved in Manicheism with me, deceived by the appearance of good. Afterwards he came to Rome, to learn the law, and there was ensnared with a new evil, a fondness for the barbarous sports of gladiators, to which he had a strong aversion. Some friends of his carried him to them by force, while he declared with great confidence, that his mind and eyes should still be alienated from those spectacles. For a while he closed his eyes with great resolution, till, on a certain occasion, when the whole house rang with shouting, overcome by curiosity, he opened his eyes to see what was the matter. Beholding a gladiator wounded, on the sight of the blood he was inebriated with the sanguinary pleasure. He gazed, he shouted, he was inflamed, he carried away with him the

madness, which stimulated him to repeat his visits; he became enamoured of the sports, even more than those who had dragged him thither against his will, and seduced others. Thence thou with a strong and merciful hand recoveredst him at length, but long after, and taughtest him to put his confidence not in himself, but in thee.* On another occasion, Alypius was apprehended as a thief, and circumstances seemed to tell so much against him, that it was by a particular providence his innocence was cleared. But he was to be a dispenser of thy word, an examiner of many causes in thy Church, and he learned caution and wisdom from this event. Him I found at Rome, and he removed with me to Milan, and practised in the law with uncommon uprightness and integrity. With me, he was uncertain with respect to his plan of religion and the way of happiness.

My friend Nebridius also left a good paternal estate in the neighbourhood of Carthage, for the sake of enjoying my company; and we three were panting after happiness, till thou shouldest give us meat in due season; and amidst all the bitterness which attended our worldly concerns, while we were wishing to see the end of these things, we found ourselves in darkness, and we said with sighs, How long! Yet we still followed objects with which we were dissatisfied, because we knew nothing better to substitute in their room.

As to myself in particular, I reviewed attentively how long I had been in pursuit of the true wisdom, with a determination to give up secular pursuits in case of success. I had begun at nineteen, and I was now in my thirtieth year, still miserable, anxious, procrastinating, fed with tantalizing hopes, solicited in my conscience to set apart a portion of time each day for the care of my soul. "Your mornings are for your pupils: why do not you employ to serious purpose the afternoons? But then what time shall I have to attend the levees of the Great, and to unbend my mind with necessary relaxation! What, then, if death should

* A lively picture of human vanity, perfectly agreeable to the whole tenor of Ecclesiastes, and confirming the distress of those in high life to be at least equal to that of their inferiors. Ambition receives no cure from the review, till the man knows what is better.

* It is obvious to observe hence the folly of self-confidence, and the bewitching power of temptation over so weak and corrupt a creature as man. Many who would deem it impossible that they should enter with spirit into the obscurity of the stage, or the cruelties of the slave trade, by a little indulgence, may soon become what beforehand they would abhor.

suddenly seize you, and judgment overtake you unprepared? Yet, on the other side, what if death itself be the extinction of my being! But far be from my soul the idea. God would never have given such high proofs of credibility to Christianity, nor have shown himself so marvellously among men, if the life of the soul be consumed with the death of the body. Why, then, do I not give myself wholly to seek God? But do not be in too great a hurry: you have friends of consequence, by whom you may rise in the world!"

In such an agitation of mind as this did I live, seeking happiness, and yet flying from it. To be divorced from the enjoyments of the world I could not bear, particularly from female society; and as I had no idea of acquiring continency but by my own strength, I was a stranger to the way of prayer and divine supply of grace. Thou, Lord, wilt give, if we solicit thine ears with internal groaning, and in solid faith cast our care on thee. My mother was solicitous and importunate for my being married, that I might in that state receive baptism. I promised marriage to a person who was then too young; and as she was agreeable to me, I consented to wait almost two years. During this interval, a number of us, about ten in all, formed a scheme of living in common in a society separate from the world in which a townsman of mine, Romanianus, a man of considerable opulence, was particularly earnest. But some of us being married men, and others desirous of becoming so, the scheme came to nothing. Thou deriddest our plans, and preparedst thy own, meaning to give us food in due season, and to open thine hand, and fill our souls with blessedness. In the mean time my sins were multiplied, and the woman with whom I had cohabited, returning into Africa under a vow of never more being acquainted with our sex, and leaving with me a natural son which I had by her, I, impatient of the delay, took another woman in her room. Praise and glory be thee, O Fountain of Mercies! I became more miserable, and thou approachedst nearer. Thou wast going to snatch me out of the mire of pollution, and I knew it not. The fear of death and future judgment was the check which restrained me. This had never left me amidst the variety of opinions with which I was agitated, and I owned to Alypius and Nebridius, that

the Epicurean doctrine would have had the preference in my judgment, could I have fallen in with Epicurus's idea of the annihilation of man at death; and I inquired why we might not be happy, if we were immortal, and were to live in a perpetual state of voluptuousness without any fear of losing it; ignorant as I was of the misery of being so drenched in carnality, as not to see the excellency of embracing goodness itself for its own sake. I did not consider, that I conferred on these base topics with friends whom I loved, and was incapable of tasting pleasure, even according to the carnal ideas I then had of pleasure without friends.*

O my serpentine ways! Wo to the soul which presumed, if it departed from thee, that it should find any thing better. I turned on every side, and all things were hard, and thou alone wast my rest; and lo! thou comest and freest us from our miserable delusions, and placest us in thy way, and comfortest us, and sayest, "Run, and I will bear you; I will carry you through, and bear you still."

BOOK VII.

AND now the older I grew, the more defiled was I with vanity, still destitute of the spiritual idea of God; not conceiving however of thee, O Lord, as existing in human form, an error of which, I now saw, I had unjustly accused the catholic church, but still viewing thee as an object of sense, however refined; and when I removed the ideas of space and quantity, thou seemest to be nothing at all. For thou hadst not yet illuminated my darkness. The arguments of my friend Nebridius appeared to me conclusive against the Manichean idea of an independent evil principle in nature. I was grown firm in the belief, that in the Lord is nothing corruptible, mutable, or in any sense imperfect; that evil must not be imputed to him, in order that we may clear ourselves of blame, with the Manichees. Still however, a question distressed me, how came evil into being at all? Admitting that it lies in the will of man, that the distinction between a natural and moral inability is real and just, and that

* A strong intimation that happiness consists in love of friendship. Whence the pleasure of friendship with Jesus, an Almighty, all-sufficient friend, made man for us, and sympathizing with us, appears to give us the just and adequate idea of bliss.

the former is not the proper subject of blame as the latter is; still I inquired, who ingrafted into my stem this cyon of bitterness, seeing that I was created by Him who is infinite sweetness? I inquired whence came evil, and I saw not the evil which was in my investigations. I stated the great difficulty in various lights, and it still appeared as inexplicable as ever. The faith, however, of Christ our Lord and Saviour remained firm with me, rude and unrefined indeed; yet my mind forsook it not, and was imbibing it daily more and more.*

From the vain science of astrology also, which I had cultivated with obstinacy, I was delivered, partly by the reasonings of my excellent friend Nebridius, and partly by a story which I heard of a master and slave born at the same point of time, whose different fortunes in life appeared to be a sufficient confutation of all predictions by the stars;† and the case of Esau and Jacob in holy writ illustrated the same thing. But it was thou, and thou only, who recalledst me from the death of idol error, O thou life that knowest not death, and thou wisdom who illuminatest ignorant minds. Thou breakest this bond for me; still I was seeking whence comes evil. Yet, by all the fluctuations of thought thou didst not suffer me to be seduced from the faith of thy existence, of thy perfections, of thy providence, or to doubt that in Christ thy Son and in the Scriptures thou hast laid down the way of salvation. What were the greetings, the labours of my heart! While I silently inquired, distressed and confounded, thou knewest the whole, thou knewest what I suffered, and, no man

whatever, not my most intimate friends, could know, by any description which I could give, the bitterness of my soul. My folly was, to look for a local, external happiness. No such was found to receive me. By the original dignity of my nature, I was above all sensual objects; and thou, my true joy, madest me subject to thyself, and subjectedst to me the works of thy hands. This was the middle region of health, in which I might serve thee and rule the body. But I proudly rose up against thee, and was justly punished, by being enslaved to those things which should have been my subjects; they gave me no respite nor rest. My pride separated me from thee, and closed my eyes with its own tunid importance. But thou, Lord, remainest for ever, and retainest not anger for ever; thou pitiest us, and rememberest that we are dust and ashes. It pleased thee to remove my deformities, and by internal incentives thou agitatedst me, that I might be impatient till thou madest thyself assuredly known to me by internal illumination. The morbid tumours of my mind were gradually lessening under thy secret medicinal hand, and the eyes of my understanding, darkened and confounded as they were, by the sharp eye-salve of salutary pains, were healing day by day.

And first as thou wouldst show me how thou resistest the proud, and givest grace to the humble; and how great thy mercy is shown to be in the way of humility; thou procuredst for me, by means of a person highly inflated with philosophical pride, some of the books of Plato translated into Latin, in which I read passages concerning the divine Word, similar to those in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel; in which his eternal divinity was exhibited, but not his incarnation, his atonement, his humiliation, and glorification of his human nature. For thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes; that men might come to thee weary and heavy laden, and that thou mightest refresh them; thou, who art meek and lowly in heart, who directest the meek in judgment, and teachest the gentle thy ways, seeing our low estate, and forgiving all our sins. This is a knowledge not to be attained, while men are lifted up by the pomp and grandeur of what appears to them a sublimer doctrine. Thus did I begin to form better views of

* I have endeavoured to compress the author's accounts of his difficulties in these two questions of the substance of God, and of the origin of evil, into a small compass, not thinking it essential to translate them at large. Macmillan was the cause of his troubles in regard to the former. The latter is in all ages a natural temptation to our proud minds, and we are slow to learn to answer it with St. Paul: Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Rom. ix. Humility will end the subject there; and pride is not to be satisfied by any investigations.

† Few men have candour enough to put themselves in the places and scenes of others. Nothing is more certain than this, that Augustine and Macmillan were men of extraordinary understanding; both however were addicted to astrology, an absurdity, which even the weakest in our age escapes. Such is the difference of the times!

the Divine nature, even from Plato's writings, as thy people of old spoiled the Egyptians of their gold, because whatever good there is in any thing is all thy own; and at the same time I was enabled to escape the evil which was in those books, and not to attend to the idols of Egypt.

However, I was hence admonished to retire into myself under thy guidance, and I was enabled to do it, because thou art my helper. I entered, and saw with the eye of my mind the immovable light of the Lord, perfectly distinct from sensible light, not only in degree, but in kind. Nor was it in the same manner above my mind, that oil is above water, or as heaven is above earth, but superior, because he made me, and I was inferior, because made by him.* He who knows truth, knows this light, and he who knows it, knows eternity. Love knows it. O eternal truth, true love, and loving eternity! Thou art my God, I pant after thee day and night. And when I first knew thee, thou tookest me that I might see that "to be" which I saw; and that I who saw, "as yet was not." Thou impressedst repeatedly my infirm sight, thou shinedst on me vehemently, and I trembled with love and horror, and I found that I was far from thee in a region of dissimilitude, as if I heard thy voice from on high, "I am the food of those that are of full age; grow, and thou shalt eat me." Nor shalt thou change me into thyself, but shalt thyself be changed into me. And I said, can God be nothing, since he is neither diffused through finite nor infinite space? And thou criest from afar, "I am that I am,"† and I heard with my heart, and could not doubt. Nay I should sooner doubt my own existence, than the truth of that which is understood by the things that were made.

I now began to understand, that every creature of thine hand is in its nature good, and that universal nature is justly called

on to praise the Lord for his goodness.* The evil which I sought after has no positive existence; were it a substance, it would be good, because every thing individually, as well as all things collectively, is good. Evil appeared to be a want of agreement in some parts to others. My opinion of the two independent principles, in order to account for the origin of evil, was without foundation. Evil is not a thing to be created; let good things only forsake their just place, office and order, and then, though all be good in their nature, evil, which is only a privative, abounds and produces positive misery. I asked what was iniquity, and I found it to be no substance, but a perversity of the will, which declines from thee the Supreme Substance to lower things, and casts away its internal excellencies, and swells with pride externally.‡

And I wondered that I now began to have a desire after thee, and no longer took a phantasm for thee. I was not urgent to enjoy thee, my God, for though I was hurried toward thee, by thy beauty, I was presently carried downward from thee by my own weight, and I could no longer sin without groaning; the weight was carnal habit. The memory of thee was with me, and I did not doubt of the reality of that divine essence to which I should adhere, but of myself being ever brought into a state of spiritual existence. I saw thy invisible things, by the things which were made, but I could not fix my attention to thee; my corruption exerting itself, I returned to my usual habits, but I could not shake off the fragrance of memory, smelling the true good, regretting the loss, and impotent to taste and enjoy.‡

I now sought the way of obtaining strength to enjoy thee, and found it not, till I embraced the mediator between God

* Psalm cxlviii.

† Perhaps a more just account of the manner in which evil is produced can scarcely be given; it is certainly well calculated to confute the principles of Manichæism.

‡ In many true converts this was their state exactly, while God was turning them from darkness to light. Such a sense of God, as never before was known, is attained, sufficient to conquer the false and injurious thoughts of him, which had been before imbibed, be they what they may. But the man feels his impotence with respect to good, and he must, with Augustine, struggle and endure for a time, till the strength of Jesus is perfected in his weakness.

* He had been long corrupted by the Atheistic views which he had learned from the Manichees, and no wonder that he now found it so difficult to conceive a right of God. There appears something divinely spiritual in the manner of his deliverance. That the Platonic books also should give the first occasion is very remarkable; though I apprehend the Latin translation which he saw, had improved on Plato, by the mixture of something scriptural, according to the manner of the Ammonian philosophers.

† Exodus iii.

and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is ABOVE ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER,* calling and saying, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. For the Word was made flesh, that thy wisdom might suckle our infancy. But I did not yet in humility hold the humble Jesus, my Lord, nor know the mysterious power of his weakness, that he might humble, nourish, and at length exalt heavy-laden souls. Far other thoughts had I conceived of Christ. I had viewed him only as a man of unequalled wisdom. But, of the mystery of the Word made flesh, I had not formed the least suspicion. Only I concluded from the things written of him, that he must have had a human soul. Alypius indeed had conceived, that the catholic faith denied him the spirit of a man, and was a longer time prejudiced against the truth, because he contemned the Church with the Apollinarian heresy. As to myself, I was not till some time after taught to distinguish the truth from the opinion of Photinus;† but there must be heresies, that they who are of the truth may be made manifest.

But when, by reading the Platonic books I began to conceive of the immaterial infinite Supreme, I talked of these things like a person of experience, but was perishing, because void of Christ, I desired to appear wise, was puffed up with knowledge, and wept not. Love, on the foundation of humility, which is Christ Jesus, was to me unknown. The books of Plato knew not this; still would I remark the providence of my God, in leading me to study them, before I searched the Scriptures, that I might remember how I had been affected by them; and when afterwards my wounds should be healed by thy hands through the Scriptures, I might distinguish the difference between presumption and confession, between those who see whether we ought to go, without knowing the means, and those who see the way itself leading to the actual inheritance. Had I been informed at first by thy Scriptures, and then hadst endeared thyself to me in their familiarity, an after-acquaintance

with Plato might either have shaken my faith, or raised in me an undue estimation of the worth of his writings.

With eagerness, therefore, I took up the inspired volume,* and particularly the Apostle Paul; and those questions, in which he once had seemed inconsistent with himself, and the law, and the prophets, were now no more. There now appeared one uniform tenor of godliness, and I learnt to rejoice with trembling, and I took up the book, and found whatever truth I had read there, is said with this recommendation of thy grace, that he who sees should not so GLORY AS IF HE HAD NOT RECEIVED, not only that which he sees, but the power of seeing himself.† For what hath he, which he hath not received? And he who cannot see afar, should however walk in the way, by which he may come, see, and lay hold. For though he be delighted WITH THE LAW OF GOD IN THE INWARD MAN, YET WHAT SHALL HE DO WITH THE OTHER LAW IN HIS MEMBERS WARRING AGAINST THE LAW OF HIS MIND, AND BRINGING HIM INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE LAW OF SIN, WHICH IS IN HIS MEMBERS!‡ For thou, Lord, art just, but we have sinned and dealt wickedly, and thy hand is heavy upon us, and we are justly delivered up to the power of the old sinner who has the power of death, because he persuaded us to follow his will, by which he did not stand in the truth. Who shall deliver us from the body of this death, but thy grace through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom the prince of this world could find nothing worthy of death, and who by his death blotted out the hand-writing that was against us! The Platonic books had nothing of this, nor the face of piety, the tears of confession, the sacrifice of a troubled spirit, a broken and contrite heart, salvation, the spouse, the holy city, the earnest of the Holy Spirit, the cup of our redemption. In them no one hears, * Come unto me all that labour and are heavy laden, and

* It may be remarked here, how depraved the taste of man is, and how much and how long he will suffer before he give himself simply to the instruction of God's own words.

† He means the inestimable privilege of spiritual understanding, through his want of which St. Paul had long appeared to him contradictory, confused, and disgusting. The man is well qualified to recommend to others the value of divine teaching, who, like Augustine, is experiencing it in himself. Nothing touches humility like such experience.

‡ Rom. vii.

* Here is a clear testimony to the authenticity and genuine interpretation of that remarkable text, Rom. ix. 4. the light of which has been so particularly offensive to those whom fashionable heresies in our age have darkened.

† Which seems to have been the same with Sabellianism.

I will give you rest." It is one thing to see a land of peace at a distance, with no practicability of attaining it, and another to pursue the right road towards it, under the care of the heavenly Commander, who made the road for our use. I was wonderfully affected with these views, while I read **THE LEAST OF THINE APOSTLES**, and I considered thy works and trembled.

BOOK VIII.

ALL MY BONES SHALL SAY, LORD, WHO IS LIKE UNTO THEE! Thou hast broken my bones in sunder. How thou breakest them, I will relate; and all who worship thee, when they hear these things, shall bless the Lord. Though now confirmed in my doctrinal views, my heart was yet uncleaned. I approved of the Saviour, in general, who is the Way, but was offended with his narrow way, and thou inspiredst me with a desire of going to Simplician, an aged, experienced Christian, even from his youth, who seemed capable of instructing me in my present fluctuations. My desires no longer being inflamed with the hope of honour and money, I was displeased with the servitude of the world in which I lived. Thy sweetness was now more agreeable in mine eyes; but another tie still detained me, in which I had permission indeed in a legal way, though exhorted to the higher and nobler practice of celibacy.* I had heard from the mouth of Truth, that there are eunuchs, who HAVE MADE THEMSELVES EUNUCHS FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN'S SAKE.

I went to Simplician, the spiritual father of bishop Ambrose himself, who loved him as his father. I explained to him my religious situation. When I was relating, that I had read some Platonic books translated by Victorinus, a Roman rhetorician, who had died a Christian, he congratulated me on having met with that philosopher rather than any of the rest; because they are full of fallacy, but in him intimations are given of God and of his word.† Then for my practical instruction, he gave me the narrative of the conversion of Victorinus, with whom he

had been intimate at Rome. Thy grace was indeed admirable in that convert. He was a man of great learning, far advanced in life, well skilled in all liberal knowledge; he had read, criticised, and illustrated many philosophers; he had taught many illustrious senators; had been honoured by a statue erected in the Roman Forum, as a reward of his labours; and even to his old age was a worshipper of idols, and a partaker of all the rites, to which almost the whole Roman nobility at that time were addicted; moreover, he had, many years, defended the monstrous and absurd objects of worship, to which the common people had been accustomed, but now he was not ashamed to become a child of thy Christ, an infant of thy fountain, with his neck subjected to the yoke of humility, and his forehead subdued to the reproach of the cross. O Lord, thou, who bowedst the heavens and camest down, who touchedst the mountains, and they smoked, by what means didst thou insinuate thyself into his heart! He read, as Simplician told me, the holy Scripture, and studiously investigated all Christian literature, and told my instructor, not openly, but in secrecy as to a friend, "Know that I am already a Christian." He answered, "I shall not believe it, nor rank you among Christians, till I see you in the Church of Christ." But he smiling, answered, "Do walls then make Christians?" This kind of dialogue was frequently repeated between them. For Victorinus feared to offend his friends, men of rank and dignity, and he dreaded the loss of reputation. But after that, by further studying of the word, and by secret prayer, he had acquired more strength, and feared to be denied by Christ before the angels, if he denied him before men, and felt himself condemned for being ashamed of Christian sacraments, though he had not been ashamed of demon-worship, he blushed at his false modesty, and suddenly said to Simplician, "Let us go to the Church, I wish to be made a Christian." The venerable old saint, unable to contain his joy, went with him when he was imbued with the first sacraments of instruction. Not long after, he gave in his name, that he might have the benefit of Christian baptism. Rome was astonished; the church rejoiced. The proud saw and were indignant, and gnashed with their teeth and pined away; but, the Lord his God was the hope of thy servant, and he no longer regarded lying

* Corinthians vii.

† Here I apprehend is a proof of the decay of Christian taste in the Church at that time, the consequence of Ammonianism and Origenism, namely, a disposition to find in Plato what he has not. What communion hath the temple of God with idols?

vanities. At length, when the season came on of professing his belief, which profession is usually delivered at Rome from a high place, in the sight of the faithful, in a certain form of words gotten by heart, by those who are to partake of thy grace in baptism, an offer was made by the presbyters, that he should repeat them more secretly, as was the custom for some who were likely to be disturbed through bashfulness. But he chose rather to profess his salvation in the sight of the holy multitude; for there was no salvation in rhetoric, and yet he had publicly professed it. When he mounted the pulpit to repeat,—all who knew him, (and who was there that did not know him!) with a whisper of congratulation surrounded his name. Amidst the general joy, the sound, though checked with devout reverence, went round, “Victorinus, Victorinus!” They exulted at the sudden sight of him; and were as suddenly silent, that they might hear him. He pronounced the form of words with an excellent confidence, and all wished to hold him in their bosom, and they actually did so in love and joy.*

O generous God! what is the cause, that men more rejoice in the salvation of a soul despaired of, than if it had always been in a state of security! For even thou, merciful Father! rejoicest more over one penitent, than over ninety and nine just persons, that need no repentance, and we hear with peculiar pleasure the recovery of thy prodigal son. Now what is the reason, that the mind is more delighted with things recovered, than with things never lost? Human life is full of such instances. Is this the law of human happiness? How high art thou in the highest, and how inaccessible in the deepest! Thou never needest from us, and with reluctance we return to thee. Awake, O Lord, and do, quicken and recal us, inflame and carry us along; burn, be sweet to our taste, and let us now love and run.

* I thought a careful translation of this story was proper. It is an instance of victorious grace, something like that which we have made at large related by Augustine concerning himself. It shows how despicable real Christianity was among the great, even in countries where it was the established religion, as was then the case at Rome; and what grace is needful to cause men to be willing to bear the cross of Christ, and to illustrate also some Christian customs and discipline at that time.

The joy of Victorinus's conversion indeed was greater, because his influence and authority, it was hoped, might be useful to the salvation of many. For, far be it from thee, that in thy house there should be respect of persons, since thou HAST CHOSEN THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD TO CONFOUND THE STRONG, AND BASE THINGS OF THE WORLD, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.* What a treasure had the heart and tongue of Victorinus been to Satan! Well did it become thy sons to exult, because our king had bound the strong man, and they saw his goods taken from him, and cleansed, and fitted for thy honour, and to every good work.

Hearing these things from Simplician, I was inflamed with the desire of imitation. But after he had informed me further that Victorinus, on occasion of Julian's prohibitory law, had given up his professorship, I found an inclination to imitate him, bound as I was, to the same calling, not by a foreign chain, but by my own iron will. The enemy held my will, thence formed my chain, and held me fast. From a perverse will was formed lust, from the indulgence of lust was formed habit, and habit unresisted became necessity. Of such links was my chain of slavery composed; and the new will, which was beginning in me, to worship thee freely, and enjoy thee, my sole certain pleasure, was not yet strong enough to overcome the old one, hardened by custom. Thus two wills, the old and the new, the flesh and the spirit, contended within me, and between them tore my very soul.† Thus did I understand by my own experience what I had read, that the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.‡ I indeed was actuated by both, but more by that which I approved, than by that which I disapproved. I had now no just excuse; truth was certain to me, yet I was loth to

* 1 Cor. i.

† Excellent comment on Rom. vii.—A description only to be fully understood by experienced Christians.

‡ Galat. v. where the same subject is more briefly handled: the conflict is well known to true Christians all their days, though it most strikes their minds at first. In the unconverted it can have no existence, because the will is inclined only one way, and it is therefore quite a different thing from the conflict between reason and passion, with which it has been confounded.

serve thee, and was as afraid to be rid of my impediments, as I ought to have been of contracting them. My meditations on thee, were like the attempts of men desirous of awaking, but sinking again into sleep. I had not a heart to answer thee, AWAKE THOU THAT SLEEPEST, AND ARISE FROM THE DEAD, AND CHRIST SHALL GIVE THEE LIGHT.* By and by—shortly—let me alone a little—these were the answers of my heart. But, by and by had no bounds, and let me alone a little, went to a great length. In vain was I delighted with thy law in the inner man, when another law in my members warred against the law of my mind. Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death, but thy grace through Jesus Christ our Lord?

My anxiety increasing, I daily groaned to thee, I frequented thy church as often as I had leisure from these employments under the weight of which I groaned. Alypius was with me during his vacation from the law, which was his practice, as rhetoric was mine. Our other friend, Nebridius, was gone to assist Verecundus at Milan, in teaching grammar, who studiously avoided attendance upon the great, that he might command leisure to improve his mind. On a certain day, Politian, an African, one of our townsmen, came to visit me and Alypius. We sat down to converse, and upon the play-table which was before us, he saw a book, opened it, and found it to be the Apostle Paul, to his great surprise; for he supposed it to have been a book relating to my profession. He, though a soldier at court, was a devout person, and congratulated me on my taste. On my informing him, how earnestly I studied those epistles, he gave me an account of Anthony the Egyptian monk, a character to that hour unknown to us; he informed us also of a number of monasteries, of which we knew nothing. There was even a monastery at Milan under the care of Ambrose at that time, of which we had not heard.† When he had given a narration also of two of his companions, who suddenly

gave themselves up to God in the same way, and forsook the world, I felt myself confounded. About twelve years had now elapsed from the nineteenth year of my life, when I read Cicero's Hortensius, to this time since I had begun to seek wisdom, and I was yet at a distance from joy. In the entrance on youth, I had prayed for chastity, and had said, "Give me chastity and continence, but grant not my request immediately." For I was afraid, lest thou shouldst quickly hear my prayer, and heal this distemper of concupiscence, which I wished rather to be fully gratified than extinguished. And I had gone on perversely in depraved superstition, with a heart at enmity against thy truth, and had deferred from day to day to devote myself to thee, under the pretence that I was uncertain where the truth lay. Now that it was certain, I was still a slave, and "I hear of others, who have not studied ten or twelve years as I have done, and who, notwithstanding, have given themselves up to God." Such were my thoughts. What pains did I not take to spur my reluctant spirit! My arguments were spent, a silent trepidation remained, and I dreaded deliverance itself as death. "What is this," said I to Alypius, "which you have heard? Illiterate men rise and seize heaven, while we, with all our learning, are rolling in the filth of sin." In the agitation of my spirit I retired into the garden belonging to the house, knowing how evil I was, but ignorant of the good thou hadst in store for me. Alypius followed me, and we sat remote from the house, and with vehement indignation I rebuked my sinful spirit, because it would not give itself up to God. I found I wanted a will. Still was I restrained, and thou, in secret, wast urgent upon me with severe mercy. Vanities of vanities, my old mistresses, shook my vesture of flesh, and whispered, Are we to part? and for ever? The evil suggestions which I felt, may thy mercy avert from the soul of thy servant! Canst thou live without us? they said; but with less and less power. On the other hand appeared the chaste dignity of Continence. Canst thou not, said she, perform what many of both sexes have performed, not in themselves indeed, but in the strength of the Lord? Cast thyself on him, fear not, he will not suffer thee to fall. Turn a deaf ear to the suggestions of the flesh; they speak of pleasure, but not as the law of thy God. Such

* Ephesians v.

† Should the serious reader find himself inclined to blame this monastic taste, I agree with him; but let the principle have its just praise; it originated in a desire of freedom from the temptations of the world; and let professors of godliness observe, how much the excessive indulgence of the commercial spirit prevents their own progress in our times.

was my internal controversy. When deep meditation had collected all my misery into the view of my heart, a great storm arose, producing a large shower of tears. To give it vent, I rose up hastily from Alypius. The sound of my voice appeared pregnant with weeping, and he remained motionless in the same place. I prostrated myself under a fig-tree, and with tears bursting out, I spoke to this effect: How long, Lord, wilt thou be angry! for ever! remember not my old iniquities. For I perceived myself entangled by them. How long shall I say to-morrow! why should not this hour put an end to my slavery! Thus I spoke, and wept in the bitterness of my soul, and I heard a voice, as from a neighbouring house, repeating frequently, "Take up and read, take up and read." I paused, and began to think, whether I ever had heard boys use such a speech in any play, and could recollect nothing like it. I then concluded that I was ordered from heaven, to take up the book, and read the first sentence I cast mine eyes upon. I returned hastily to the place where Alypius was sitting; for there I had placed the book of St. Paul's Epistles. I seized it, opened, and read what first struck my eyes; "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." Nor did I choose to read any thing more, nor had I occasion. Immediately at the end of this sentence, all my doubts vanished. I closed the book, and with a tranquil countenance gave it to Alypius. He begged to see what I had read, I showed him it, and he read still further.* "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye;" which he applied to himself, as he told me. With a placid serenity and composure suitable to his character, in which he far excelled me, he joined with me in going to my mother, who now triumphed in the abundant answers given to her petitions. Thus didst thou turn her mourning into joy.

BOOK IX.

O Lord, I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, thou hast broken my bonds in sunder. Let my heart and tongue, and all my bones say, Lord, who is like unto thee! and do thou answer

me, and say to my soul, I am thy salvation. Who and what am I! what evil am I not! Was it my will, or words, or deeds, that have done it! No; but thou, Lord, good and merciful, by thy powerful right hand delivered me from the depths of misery; and thoroughly cleansed the very bottom of my heart of all its corruptions. The whole of my evil lay in a will stubbornly set in opposition to thine. But where lay my free-will of old time, and from what deep secret was it called out in a moment, by which I bowed my neck to thy easy yoke, and my shoulders to thy light burden, Christ Jesus, my helper and Redeemer! How sweet was it, in a moment to be free from those delightful vanities, to lose which had been my dread, to part with which was now my joy! Thou ojectedst them, O my true and consummate delight, and thou enteredst in their room, O sweeter than all pleasure, but not to flesh and blood; clearer than all light, but to the inner man; higher than all honour, but not to those who are high in their own conceits. Now was my mind set free from the corroding cares of avarice and ambition and lust, and I conversed familiarly with thee, my light, my riches, my Saviour, and my God.

I determined in thy sight to give up my employments, not abruptly, but gradually.* And opportunely, the vintage

* I would suggest four particular remarks on the narrative of our author's conversion. 1. That it does please God in every age to distinguish some of the works of his Holy Spirit by extraordinary circumstances. It is of little consequence, to debate whether the voice heard in the garden was miraculous or not, whether literally true, or an impression on his mind. Either way it was equally from God, and sheds a lustre on the conversion of a great and eminently holy personage, who was called to testify remarkably for God in his day. 2. There is generally some master-sin, which impedes the work of God in all his people; Augustine's was sensuality, and in the mortification of that master-sin the grace of God is peculiarly illustrated. 3. The great medium of deliverance always is, the written word of God testifying of Jesus, and salvation only by putting him on through faith. 4. Man's excitement is God's opportunity. In our weakness thoroughly-felt God appears. Is it to be wondered, that the Saint before us proved so strong and zealous a champion of the effectual grace of God, and was made use of to revive the clear doctrine of it in the church, and was trained up by his own experience to defend it against the subtleties of Pelagius? He who foresew what Pelagius would introduce, in his

* Rom. xiii. cud, and xiv. beginning.

vacation being at hand, I resolved to continue in my employment till that time. I was glad also, that I had an opportunity of saying to my scholars, what was true, that the care of my health, which had suffered much from fatigue, obliged me to cease from the laborious office of teaching. And to have given up the work before the vacation might have appeared arrogant, and exposed me to the censure of vanity. But should any of thy servants think, that I did wrong in remaining in the chair of deceit a day longer, I will not contend. But hast not thou, most merciful Lord, washed away this, with all my other deadly sins, in the laver of regeneration?

Our friend Verecundus was seized with a distemper, and receiving baptism in the midst of it, departed this life in thy faith and fear. Not long after my conversion, my friend Nebridius also, though he had sunk into the error which takes away the proper manhood of thy Son, was recovered; and becoming a faithful Christian, in Africa his own country, quitted this tabernacle of clay, and now lives in Abraham's bosom. He no more puts his ear to my mouth, but his spiritual mouth to thy fountain to receive as much wisdom as he is capable of—happy without end.

It is pleasant to me to remember and confess how thou didst teach me and my friend Alypius, in the country, where we enjoyed the affectionate and sedulous care of my mother. We were both in the capacity of catechumens, and I read with pleasure the Psalms of David. With what mingled pity and indignation did I look on the Manichees, who madly rejected the antidote of life. O that they saw the internal eternal life, which because I had tasted, I grieved that I could not show it to them!

The holidays being finished, I signified to my scholars, that they must provide themselves another teacher. And I wrote to Ambrose an account of my errors, and of my present desire; and begged him to recommend some part of thy word more particularly to my attention, as a proper preparative for baptism. He pointed out to me the prophet Isaiah, I apprehend, on account of his superior perspicuity in opening the Gospel. However, finding the

first part of this prophet more obscure, and apprehending the rest to be similar, I deferred the reading of him, till I was more experienced in the Scriptures. The time approaching in which I must give in my name, I left the country and returned to Milan. There I received baptism with Alypius and the boy Adeodatus, the fruit of my sin. He was almost fifteen years old, and, in understanding, he exceeded many learned men. I glorify thee for thy gifts, my God; for I had nothing in the boy but sin. For that I brought him up in thy religion, thou, and thou only, inspiredst me. I looked with trembling at his prodigious genius. But thou soon removedst him from the earth, and I remember him with greater satisfaction, as I have now no anxiety for his childhood, his youth, or his manhood. Nor could I at that time be satisfied with contemplating the mystery of redemption. The hymns and songs of thy church moved my soul intensely; thy truth was distilled by them into my heart; the flame of piety was kindled, and my tears flowed for joy. This practice of singing had been of no long standing at Milan. It began about the year when Justina persecuted Ambrose. The pious people watched in the church, prepared to die with their pastor. There my mother sustained an eminent part in watching and praying. Then hymns and psalms, after the manner of the East, were sung, with a view of preserving the people from weariness; and thence the custom has spread through Christian churches.

Thou, who makest men to be of one mind in a house, unitedst to us one of our young townsmen, Euodius, who had served in the army, and was now regenerated. We determined to return to Africa; and when we were at the mouth of the Tiber, my mother departed this life. I must not pass by the conceptions of my soul concerning her, who endured labour for my temporal birth, and laboured in heart for my spiritual birth. She had been brought up in a Christian family, but did not so much commend her mother's care, as that of a decrepid old servant of the house, who had nursed her father, whose years and character were highly respected, and who superintended the education of her master's daughters. She never suffered them to drink even water, except at meals, telling them that if ever they became mistresses, the custom of drinking would remain, but they would

adorable wisdom, thus provided an experienced pastor of his church, who in due time should withstand his corruptions.

then indulge it in wine, not water. Yet my mother Monica, notwithstanding the care of this provident governess, when young, had learned by degrees to drink wine, having been sent to draw it for the use of the family. By what method was she delivered from this snare? Thou providedst for her a malignant reproach from a maid of the house, who, in a passion, called her drunkard. From that moment she gave up the practice forever. Thus didst thou prepare a cure for her evil practice, by the malevolent railing of another, that no man may attribute it to his own power, if his admonitions of another be attended with salutary effect.*

After her marriage with my father Patricius, she endeavoured to win him over to thy service by the amiableness of her manners, and patiently bore the injuries of his unfaithfulness. She still looked for thy mercy, that, learning to believe in thee, he might become chaste. His temper was passionate, but his spirit benevolent. She knew how to bear with him when angry, by a perfect silence and composure; and when she saw him cool, would meekly expostulate with him. Many matrons in her company would complain of the blows and harsh treatment they received from their husbands, whose tempers were yet milder than that of Patricius; then she would exhort them to govern their tongues, and remember the inferiority of their condition. And when they expressed their astonishment, that it was never heard that Patricius, a man of so violent a temper, had beaten his wife, or that they ever were at variance a single day, she informed them of her plan. Those who followed it, thanked her for the good success of it; those who did not, experienced vexation. Her mother-in-law, at first, was irritated against her by the whisperings of servants. But she overcame her by mild obsequiousness, inasmuch that she at length informed her son of the slanders of those backbiters, and desired that they might be restrained. Thus she and her mother-in-law lived in perfect harmony. It was a great gift, which, O my God, thou gavest to her,

* I could not prevail with my self to pass over altogether this, and a few more circumstances of Monica's life, which follow. Let the pious and penitent, which they breathe, compensate for their simplicity. To a serious mind they will perhaps appear, not only not contemptible, but even instructive.

that she never repeated any of the fierce things, which she heard from persons who were at variance with one another, and was conscientiously exact, in saying nothing but what might tend to heal and to reconcile.

I might have been tempted to think this a small good, had I not known by grievous experience the innumerable evils resulting to society from the contrary spirit, by which men extend mischief like a pestilence, not only repeating the words of angry enemies to angry enemies, but also adding what never had been said; whereas the human mind should not be content with negative goodness in such cases, but should endeavour to promote peace by speaking what is good, as my amiable mother did, through the effectual teaching of thy Spirit. At length, in the extremity of life, she gained her husband to thee, and he died in the faith of Christ.

It was through thy secret appointment that she and I stood alone at a window facing the East, in a house at the mouth of the Tiber, where we were preparing for our voyage. Our discourse was highly agreeable, and forgetting the past, we endeavoured to conceive aright the nature of the eternal life of the saints. It was evident to us, that no carnal delights deserved to be named on this subject; erecting our spirits more ardently, we ascended above the noblest parts of the material creation to the consideration of our own minds, and passing above them, we attempted to reach heaven itself, to come to thee, by whom all things were made. There our hearts were enamoured, and there we held fast the first fruits of the Spirit, and returned to the sound of our own voice, which gave us an emblem of the Divine Word. We said, if the flesh, the imagination, and every tongue should be silenced, for they proclaim, we made not ourselves, but he who remaineth for ever: If these things should now hold their peace, and God alone should speak, not by any emblems or created things, but by himself, so that we could hear his word; should this be continued, and other visions be withdrawn, and this alone seize and absorb the spectator forever, is not this the meaning of, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"

* Matth. xiv. In Rev. xvi. 23. the same sublime thought is described under the medium of sight, which here is conveyed under the medium of hearing.

At that moment the world appeared to us of no value : and she said, Son, I have now no delight in life. What I should do here, and why I am here, I know not, the hope of this life being quite spent. One thing only, your conversion, was an object for which I wished to live. My God has given me this in larger measure. What do I here !—Scarcely five days after, she fell into a fever. A brother of mine, who was with us, lamented that she was likely to die in a foreign land. She looked at him with anxiety, to see him so grovelling in his conceptions, and then looking at me, said, Place this body any where ; do not distress yourselves concerning it. I could not but rejoice and give thee thanks, that she was delivered from that anxiety, with which I knew she always had been agitated in regard to a sepulchre, which she had provided for herself, and prepared near the body of her husband. I knew not the time when this void had been filled by the fulness of thy grace, but I rejoiced to find this evidence of it. I heard afterwards, that while we were at Ostia she had discoursed with some friends, in my absence, concerning the contempt of life, and they, expressing their surprise that she did not fear to leave her body so far from her own country ; “ Nothing,” said she, “ is far to God, and I do not fear that he should not know where to find me at the resurrection.” She departed this life on the ninth day of her illness, in the fifty-sixth year of her age, and the thirty-third of mine.*

BOOK X.

Now, Lord, my groaning testifies that I am displeased with myself; but thou art light and pleasure, and art loved and desired, that I may blush for myself, and renounce myself, and choose thee: and neither attempt to please thee, nor myself, but by depending on thee. For when I am wicked, then to confess to thee is no other thing than to be displeased with myself; and when godly, this is nothing else, but to confess that thou affordest that gift to me. The confessions of my

past evils, which thou hast forgiven, changing my mind by faith and by baptism, when they are read and heard, excite the heart, that it sink not in despair, but may watch in the love of thy mercy, and the sweetness of thy grace, by which the weak, brought to feel his own weakness, is made strong. But what advantage will result from my confessing, as I now propose, not what I was, but what I now am? I will discover myself to such as will rejoice over me for what is good, and will pray for and sympathize with me in regard to what is evil, more secure as I am through thy mercy, than my innocence. I am a little child, but my Father always lives, and is my sufficient guardian. What temptations I can or cannot resist, I know not. But my hope is this, that thou art faithful, that thou dost not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.* Lord, I love thee; thou hast smitten my heart with thy Word, and I have loved thee. But what do I love, when I love thee? not the heavens and the earth, nor any created beauty. They cry aloud, we are not God, he made us. Where shall I find thee, but in thyself, above me? Too late did I love thee, thou PRIMAÆVAL Beauty! Thou calledst aloud, and overcamest my deafness: thou shonest, and dispelledst my darkness. Thou wast fragrant, and I panted after thee. I tasted, and hungered and thirsted after thee: thou touchedst me, and I was inflamed into thy peace. When I shall stick wholly to thee, I shall no more have pain and fatigue, and my whole life shall live full of thee. But now, because thou supportest him whom thou fillest, because I am not full of thee, I am a burden to myself. My wholesome griefs and pernicious pleasures contend together, and I know not on which side the victory stands. Woe is me! Thou art my physician, I am sick. Thou art merciful, I am wretched. All my hope lies in thy immense mercy. Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt. Thou commandest us to keep from the lust of the flesh, from the lust of the eyes, and from the pride of life: and what thou commandest, thou hast given me. Yet there still live in my memory the images of evils, to which I had been habituated,

* In what follows to the end of this Book, the Author gives a very amiable picture of the filial affections, tempered by piety and resignation, which he felt on this occasion, not indeed without a mixture of the superstition of praying for the dead, which was growing in this century. In him the evangelical spirit, however, predominates extremely, even while he is indulging the superstitious. But let it suffice to have given this general account.

and they occur to me even in sleep. Is not thy hand, O God, able to heal all the diseases of my soul, and to sanctify even the hours of rest? I would rejoice with trembling in what thou hast given me, and mourn over that which is imperfect, and hope that thou wilt perfect thy mercies, when death shall be swallowed up in victory.

There is another evil of the day, and I wish the day may be sufficient for it. We refresh the continual ruins of the body by food, till this corruptible shall put on incorruption. Thou hast taught me to use food as medicine. But while I am passing from the uneasiness of hunger to the rest of satiety; in the very passage the snare of concupiscence is laid for me; and the bounds of innocence are not easily defined, and a pretence for intemperance is made on that very account. These temptations I daily endeavour to resist, and I call on thy right hand for my salvation, and make known to thee my agitations of soul, because I am not yet clear on this subject. I hear my God, "let not your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness."* The latter is far from me, let it not approach me; the former sometimes steals upon me, keep it at a distance from me. Who is there, Lord, that is perfectly temperate? Whoever he be, let him magnify thy name. But I am not he. I am a sinful man. However, I magnify thy name, and he who overcame the world, and numbers me among the weak members of his body, intercedes for my sins.

In regard to the enticement of smells, I am not sometimes. When they are absent, I want them not: when present, I do not refuse them, content to be without them entirely. So I think; but such is my miserable darkness, that I must not easily credit myself, because, what is within, generally lies hid, and experience evidences it. The only hope, the only confidence, the only firm promise, is thy mercy.

The pleasures of the ear leave deeper hold on me. I find even while I am charmed with sacred melody, I am led astray at times by the luxury of sensations, and offend, not knowing at the time, but afterwards I discover it. Sometimes, guessing against this fallacy, I err in the other extreme, and could wish all the melody of David's Psalms were removed from my ears, and those of the

church, and think it safer to imitate the plan of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, who directed a method of repeating the psalms more resembling pronunciation than music. But when I remember my tears of affection at my conversion under the melody of thy church, with which I am still affected, I again acknowledge the utility of the custom. Thus do I fluctuate between the danger of pleasure, and the experience of utility, and am induced, though with a wavering assent, to own that the infirmity of nature may be assisted in devotion by psalmody. Yet when the tune has moved me more than the subject, I feel guilty, and am ready to wish I had not heard the music. See where I am, and mourn with me, ye who are conscious of any inward feelings of godliness. I cannot expect the sympathy of those who are not. Thou, Lord, my God, hear and pity and heal me.

The pleasures of the eye I find to entangle me from time to time. But thou deliverest me, sometimes without pain, because I fall into them gently; at other times with pain, because I stick in them.

Another form of manifold danger is added, a curious spirit, palliated by the name of knowledge. Surrounded as we are with objects, when can I say I am freed from this? What vehement temptations have I had from the enemy, to ask of thee a sign: But I beseech thee by our king, Jesus Christ, that, as I am far from consenting to it, so I may be farther and farther. What a trifle diverts me from a thought of great importance, and unless thou quickly admonish me by the conviction of my infirmity, either to divert the thought by some serious meditation, or to despise it altogether, I should become absolutely dull. My life is full of these evils, and even my prayers are often disturbed, and while I apply my heart to thine ears, I am overborne by a torrent of vanities.

What can give hope, except thy mercy, by which thou hast begun to renew us? And thou knowest how much thou hast done for me already. I carry thy yoke, and find it easy, as thou hast promised. It always was so, but I did not believe it, when I was afraid to take it upon me; but thou, O Lord, thou who alone rulest without pride, because thou hast no superior, can I in this life be exempt from trials? Well done, well done, I find scattered in the nets by the enemy every where. Daily, Lord, we feel these temp-

* Luke xxi.

tations. Thou knowest, on this head, the groans of my heart, and the floods of mine eyes. Nor can I easily see, that I grow more free from this pest of pride; and I much fear my secret evils, which thou knowest. I am poor and needy, and my best method is to seek thy mercy in secret groans and in self-abhorrence, till thou perfect that which concerneth me.

There is another internal evil, by which a man, without seeking to please others, pleases himself with thy good things, as if they were his own; or if he allows them to be thine, yet he is apt to fancy them bestowed upon him for his own merits; or he pleases himself with indulging an invidious spirit against others. In all these dangers thou seest the trembling of my heart; I feel my wounds healed every now and then by thee; but I feel not an exemption from them. Sometimes thou introducest me into an uncommon affection, into a sweetness past the power of description, which, were it perfected in me, I should not see what life would want to complete its felicity. But I sink back by the weight of misery, and am held entangled.

Whom shall I look to as my mediator? Shall I go to angels? Many have tried this, and have been fond of visions, and have deserved to be the sport of the illusions which they loved. A mediator between God and man must have the nature of both. The true Mediator, whom in thy secret mercy thou hast shown to the humble, and hast sent, that by his example they might also learn humility, the man Christ Jesus, hath appeared a mediator between mortal sinners, and the immortal Holy One, that, because the wages of righteousness is life and peace, by his divine righteousness he might justify the ungodly, and deliver them from death. He was shown to ancient saints, that they might be saved by faith in his future sufferings, as we by faith in the same sufferings already past. How hast thou loved us, Father, delivering up thy only Son for us ungodly! For whom he, our priest and sacrifice, who thought it no robbery to be equal with thee, was subjected to death. Well may my hope be strong through such an intercessor; else I should despair. Many and great are my diseases, thy medicine larger still. Were he not made flesh for us, we could not dream of having any union with him. Terrified with my sins and the weight of my misery, I was de-

sponding, but thou encouragedst me, saying, Christ died for all, that they which live, should not live to themselves, but to him that died for them.* Lo, I cast all my care on thee, Lord, that I may live. Thou knowest my weakness and ignorance, teach and heal me. He hath redeemed me with his blood, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let not the proud calumniate me, if with the poor I desire to eat and be satisfied, and to praise the Lord.†

Augustine, after his conversion, returned with some friends into Africa, and lived upon his own estate for almost three years, retired from the world. A desire to oblige a person of some consequence in Hippo, who requested his instructions, brought him at length to that city, where Valerius was bishop,—a person of great piety; but, on account of his slender acquaintance with the Latin tongue, scarcely adequate to the office of pastor in that place. Augustine, through the strong and urgent desires of the people, was ordained presbyter to Valerius; but wept on the occasion, from the genuine sense which he had of the importance of the office. He told Possidius that his tears were by some misconstrued,‡ as if he regretted that he had not been chosen bishop. Such poor judges are many, of the views and sensations of godly men! Valerius rejoiced that God had heard his prayers, and that the people would now be supplied with such a pastor. He gave him licence to preach in the presence of the bishop, a thing before unknown in Africa: but which, from the good effects of this precedent, afterwards grew common. Here his ministry was useful in the instruction and edification of the brethren, and also in the defeat of various heresies. Divine truth, which had been

* 2 Cor. v.

† Psalm xxii. 26. We see in this last book the author's description of the conflict between flesh and spirit after his conversion, and the repose of his soul for peace and happiness only on the Lord Jesus as his righteousness and strength. I shall make no further remarks than to repeat his own observation in his retracted. "These confessions praise the God of righteousness and goodness, and excite the human understanding and affection toward him. They did this in me while I was writing them, and they do it still, when I read them. What others may think of them, let them judge; but I know they have much pleased and do please many of the brethren."

‡ Possid. Life of Aug.

almost buried amidst many schisms and distractions in Africa, now raised up its head again; and Fortunatus, the great leader of the Manichees, was obliged, in confusion, to leave Hippo, when he found himself, by the confession of the hearers, vanquished in a conference with Augustine.

Heresies vied with the members of the general church in their attention to the pastoral labours of Augustine, whose fame began gradually to spread throughout the Western world. Valerius rejoiced and gave thanks on the account, and being solicitous to preserve such a treasure to his church, he took care to get Augustine elected bishop of Hippo, in conjunction with himself. Age and infirmities rendered Valerius very inadequate to the work; and every true Christian will doubt which more to admire, the godly zeal of Augustine, tempered with modesty and charity, or the unfeigned humility of Valerius. Augustine, after he had strongly resisted the inclinations of the bishop and all the church, at length accepted the office; the duties of which he continued to discharge after the decease of Valerius. His zeal and laboriousness increased with his authority. The monastery of his institution became renowned in Africa; and about ten bishops of undoubted piety known to our author,* came from this seminary. These instituted monasteries after the same pattern, and from them other churches were supplied with pastors; and the doctrines of faith, hope and charity, by these means, and also by Augustine's writings, which were translated into the Greek tongue, were diffused and enforced with increasing vigour through the Christian world. His writings, however, never seem to have had any permanent influence in the Eastern church.

CHAPTER III.

THE PELAGIAN CONTROVERSY.

It is the part of an intelligent agent to choose the fittest season for the execution of arduous enterprises, or the introduction of important innovations. This rule, we may safely conclude, is observed by Satan in all his attempts against the Church of Christ. While the belief and

experience of divine influences were strong and vigorous in Christian societies, it was in vain for him to attempt to persuade men, that such influences were of no necessity or value; he could do no more than seduce them to counterfeit, abuse, or misapply them. Hence the wildness and incoherence of Montanism. But now that the holy influence of the Spirit of God was generally damped by superstition, or quenched by incontinence, Satan felt himself emboldened to erect a new heresy, which should pretend to the height of purity, supported by MERE HUMAN NATURE, exclusive of the operations of divine grace altogether. This was Pelagianism:^o and as this evil now entered the Church for the first time, and in a greater or less degree has continued to this day; as it is directly subversive of Christianity, and as it introduced a controversy, not trivial and frivolous like many others, but of unspeakable importance, it eminently falls within the plan of this History, to state the circumstances and consequences with perspicuity.

Augustine, of Hippo, had been trained up under the Lord's wholesome discipline, by an extraordinary conversion, as we have seen, during the latter part of the last century. Thus did the all-wise God, who is WONDERFUL IN COUNSEL AND EXCELLENT IN WORK, secretly stir up a scourge for Pelagius, against the time that he should make his appearance; and his heresy was eventually one of the grand means of introducing juster views of Gospel grace, than had for a long time obtained in the Church, and of reviving Christian truth, humility and piety. The effects of this effusion of the Spirit were solid, though never brilliant, operative during this century and many centuries afterwards, in the production of much real godliness in the minds of many individuals, particularly of monastic persons, to whom, for a great while, Augustine's writings were a great and useful light; indeed, next to the word of God, the greatest means of grace which they had in times extremely unfavourable to improvement. Hence, besides the immediate benefit which the Church received in his own

* In this chapter I purpose to describe its rise and progress historically. What I have said of its precise nature, will be confirmed in the proper place by the authentic lights of antiquity.

time, the utility of this providential dispensation reached to the time of the Reformation itself, and even beyond it in Popish countries; though the reader must not expect any great or strong display of the plantation of new churches, or any sudden and marvellous change in the external appearance of the Church. The light we are now to contemplate never broke out into a vivid extensive flame, but shone with faint, though steady rays, with a moderate degree of brightness at first, and afterwards glimmered through many ages.

Pelagius was born in Britain, and was in his own time called Brito.* His companion Cælestius was an Irishman, by the testimony of Jerom. He calls him a Scor, and that name in those times meant, as is known to the learned, a native of Ireland. They were both laymen; the former, by profession, a monk, who, as far as appears, always maintained a character of fair and decent morals. In the heat of contention there were who denied this; but it is admitted by Augustine with his usual candour, and we might have been certain of it, independently of his authority; because otherwise it would have been impossible for him ever to have become a person of lasting reputation in the religious world. He travelled from monastery to monastery, through various parts of the Empire. His heretical opinions did not appear till he was far advanced in life; before that time Augustine owns (though he speaks by hearsay) his reputation for serious piety to have been great in the Christian world; and those who know the difference between holiness and mere morality will not be surprised at this. Augustine allows the genius and

capacity of both these men to have been of the first order: and this testimony from him is decisive with me against that of Jerom, who treats the understanding and endowments of both with great contempt; but Jerom was not apt to allow any laudable qualities to an ADVERSARY.

Isidore of Pelusium applies to Pelagius that passage of Hosea; "grey hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth it not." This author is understood thence to intimate, that he fell into this heresy in old age. It began to appear about the year

Pelagianism appears about A. D. 404 or 405.

404 or 5. Chrysostom, writing to his friend, the deaconess Olympias, says, "I am much grieved for Pelagius the monk; consider what crowns must be reserved for those who stand firm, when men who have lived in so much mortification and continency appear to be so carried away." His first writings were an Epistle to Paulinus of Nola and other little works, in which his erroneous views of grace were so artfully expressed, and so guarded with cautious terms, that Augustine owns he was almost deceived by them. But when he saw his other writings of a later date, he discerned that he might artfully own the word GRACE, and by retaining the term, break the force of prejudice, and avoid offence, and yet conceal his meaning under a general ambiguity.

For, by a dexterity very common with heretics, Pelagius, while he laid open to his converts the whole mystery of his doctrine, imparted only so much to others as might be more calculated to ensnare their affections than to inform them of his real opinions. He used to deliver his views under the modest appearance of queries, started against the doctrines of the church, and those as not invented by himself, but by others. The effect of poisoning the minds of men was, perhaps, more powerfully produced by this, than it would have been by a more direct and positive method. To this he added another artifice; he insinuated himself into the favour of women of some rank, of weak minds, and unacquainted with the spirit of the Gospel, though professing religion; and, by their means, he diffused his tenets with much success. Cælestius, more open and daring in speech, pursued a method not so replete with deceit, and was therefore exposed to detection more easily than his master.

Pelagius, having travelled over the

* I make large use of Jansenius in this narrative; he has prefixed the history of the heresy to his treatise called Augustine: The accounts seem accurate, and well supported by authorities of contemporary writers, particularly Jerom and Augustine. I have consulted these two with much care and attention, and I find Jansenius so exact and well-informed in those things of which we have an opportunity to form an estimate, that it seems reasonable to give him credit for his extracts from the *Gesta Pelag. of Aug.*—a work which we have not in the common editions of that Father, because it was not discovered till about the time of Jansenius, being found, as he tells us, in an Abbey at Fesulze, in Italy.

Since I wrote this, I have seen the *Gesta Pelag.* in a more recent edition of Augustine, and am still further confirmed in my opinion of the accurate industry of Jansenius.

monasteries of Egypt, settled at length at Rome, where his attempts to undermine the whole doctrine of divine grace, by degrees, notwithstanding all his caution, gave offence to the Church. Unguarded moments also will happen to the most ardent, and at times discover them to the most wary. A bishop, who was a colleague of Augustine, mentioning to Pelagius those words of the Confessions, "Give what thou commandest, and command what thou wilt;" he contradicted with great vehemence, and expressed much indignation at the sentiment.

Rome being taken by the Goths about the year 410, numbers fled into Africa, and among the rest the two heresiarchs.

Pelagius was received at Hippo, in Augustine's absence, where his stay was very short. The bishop of Hippo saw him once or twice at Carthage; but was himself very busy in settling a conference with the Donatists, and nothing material passed between them. Pelagius leaving Africa passed over into Palestine; there his labours attracted the attention of Jeron, who lived a monastic life in the same country, and wrote against his opinions, justly calling on him to speak clearly what he meant, and complaining of his ambiguities.

In the mean time Celestius in Africa more openly discovered his sentiments, and made such attempts to propagate them in Carthage itself, that he was summoned to appear before a synod, which was held by Aurelius, bishop of that city. He was accused of denying original sin; and when he was pressed with the custom of the Church in baptizing infants, as a proof of her belief in all ages that infants needed redemption, he declared that they had no need of remission, and yet ought to be baptized, that they might be sanctified in Christ. Celestius was condemned as a heretic in the year 412, and disappointed of his hopes of rising in the church; for he had either obtained or was about to obtain the office of a presbyter, in Africa.

A fragment of the acts of this synod is preserved by Augustine,* though he him-

self was not present at it, in which is the following passage: "Aurelius said, Read what follows, and it was read: That the sin of Adam hurt himself alone, and not mankind. Celestius said, I owned that I was dubious concerning the communication of sin by descent from Adam (yet in such a manner, that I shall bow to the authority of those to whom God hath given the grace of superior skill); because I have heard different things from those who at least were presbyters in the church. Paulinus, a deacon, said, Name them. Celestius answered, The holy presbyter* Ruffinus at Rome: I heard him deny any communication of sin by descent. Being pressed, if he could name any more, he said, Is not one priest sufficient! On being asked, whether he had not asserted, that infants are born in a state in which Adam was before transgression, all that could be obtained from him was, That infants needed baptism, and ought to be baptized."

Indeed Pelagianism itself seemed little more than a revival of Deism, or what is commonly called natural religion. Adam, it is said, would have died, whether he sinned or not. Men might be saved by the Law, as well as the Gospel: infants just born are in the same state as Adam before transgression. Men's death depends not on that of Adam, nor does their resurrection depend on that of Christ. These tenets were objected to Celestius, and condemned. In a book which he offered to the council, he owned that children were redeemed by Christ, and yet he would not confess that the effects of Adam's sin passed upon them. So inconsistent are men, bent on the support of error, and yet willing to appear in some measure Christian!

In the mean time Pelagius, in his man-

* This is he, who was famous for his controversy with Jeron, and for the translation of Origen's works, and of whom, though he seems to be not much in the line of our history, we shall have occasion to say a little more hereafter.

† Two plain inferences seem deducible from this fragment: 1. That the right of baptizing infants was allowed on all sides to have been of apostolical and primitive authority. It is impossible that men so shrewd and learned as Celestius and his master, would not have objected to the novelty of infant-baptism, had it been a novelty. 2. The belief of original sin had universally obtained, and must have been equally apostolical. One presbyter only was named by Celestius, as favouring the doctrine of Pelagius.

* In his book on Original Sin, esp. A.

ner, was still writing against the doctrines of the Gospel; while Augustine, than whom no man was ever more cautious and deliberate in the whole controversy, answered in his writings the evil tendency of the Pelagian tenets, "avoiding," says he,* "the name of Pelagius, thinking that I might more easily profit him, if, preserving friendship, I should yet spare his modesty." But more of this hereafter.

Celestius, driven from Africa, fixed his seat in Sicily, and by the questions which he there excited, gave occasion to Augustine to employ his pen in answering him. Nor did the heresy cease in Africa: the bishop of Hippo was employed not only in writing, but also in preaching against the new notions, and gave his testimony in a solemn manner from the pulpit at Carthage.

Pelagius himself wrote in the most respectful manner to Augustine, and in the highest terms extolled his character. It is certain, that the impressions made on Augustine's mind in favour of Pelagius were strong, and not easily erased, because he had been taught to believe him to be a person of great virtue. Nothing but the completest evidence of heresy could have induced him to make an open rupture. And a soul like his, humble and charitable in a high degree, would, I doubt not, long entertain the best hopes of a man whom he had once esteemed. In this spirit he wrote to him the following guarded letter:

"I thank you for your kind letter. The Lord requite you good, by which you may be ever good, and live with the Eternal for ever. Though I cannot own the good things in myself, which your friendly Epistle mentions, yet I should be ungrateful did I not thank you; at the same time admonishing you rather to pray for me, that I may become such, from the Lord, as you think me to be."

In the year 413 an occasion was offered to Pelagius of discovering himself more openly to the world. A virgin, named

Pelagius's
Letter to a
Virgin
named
Deme-
trias,
A. D. 413.

Demetrias, of the illustrious race of the Anicii, one of the most ancient and noble families of Rome, having fled into Africa on account of the invasion of the Goths, was, by the exhortation of Augustine, induced to consecrate her vir-

ginity to God. The piety of the action was extolled in those superstitious days by all the Christian world, and the bishop of Hippo joined with others in congratulating her. For sufficient proof has already appeared, that he escaped not the infection of the age, though he mixed with it as much real humility as most persons of those times. Pelagius wrote to her a long and extremely elegant letter, exhorting her to seek true perfection, in which he plainly directs her to look to nature, not to grace, for strength: yet, it is written with so much artifice, that in his apology afterwards to Innocent, bishop of Rome, he appeals to it as a justification of his orthodoxy.* Augustine, some years after, wrote a refutation of it, addressed to Juliana, the mother of Demetrias. Pelagius wrote also another letter to a certain widow, full of the same adulatory strains, in which he so grossly discovers himself, that, as will shortly appear, he had no way left but to disown it.

In the year 415, or nearly so, two well-disposed young men, Timasius and Jacob, meeting with Pelagius, were by him induced to enter on the monastic life, in the commendation of which all parties were but too strongly agreed. But they imbibed also his self-righteous doctrine, from which, however, by the labours of Augustine, they were afterwards delivered. On this occasion, they showed Augustine a book of Pelagius, in which he vehemently accused those who pleaded the faultiness of human nature as an excuse for their sins, and in which, while he seemed to be only inveighing against a licentious abuse of Gospel grace, he evidently denied the existence of all grace, and maintained, that by that term were to be understood the natural endowments of the human mind *seasoned* and directed by free-will; and these endowments, so seasoned and directed, he acknowledged to be the free gifts of God. The bishop of Hippo, with extreme reluctance, at length admitted the full conviction of the heretical character of Pelagius and answered the book; yet he concealed his name, lest Pelagius, being offended, might become still more incurable. Augustine owns that he afterwards repented of this step, because he had

Timasius
and Jacob,
A. D. 415.

* A farther view of this letter shall be given hereafter, among what may be called the PELAGIAN PAPERS.

* Lib. de Gestis Pelag.

probably increased the pride of the heretic, through an ill-judged fear of giving him pain.

For Pelagius, hearing of Augustine's proceedings, loudly complained, that some of his books had been stolen from him; and others reckoned as his, which were not so. It is difficult to deal with doubtful men; yet the African bishop used the most prudent method. He sent his own book and Pelagius's together to Innocent, of Rome, desiring him to mark the sentiments of each, "and if he denies that these are his sentiments, I contend not; let him anathematize them, and in plain terms confess the doctrine of Christian grace. I have, says he, sufficient witnesses, men who have a great regard for him, who will attest that I had the book from them, and that it has not been falsified by me." Innocent, in reply, condemned the book altogether, as containing horrible sentiments, hitherto unprecedented in the Christian world. How much more respectable would it be to the characters of many, like Pelagius, would they at once own what they are, and make no pretensions to the doctrines of grace! But this sincerity would not so effectually serve the cause of Satan in the world.

While Jerom in the East, and Augustine in the West, were opposing Pelagianism, the heresiarch himself was summoned to appear in the latter

Pelagius remained before the Synod of Diospolis.

end of the same year 415, before a synod of fourteen bishops of Palestine, at Lydda, then called Diospolis. Here he had every advantage which an accused person could wish for. His two accusers, Hieron and Lazarus, bishops of Gaul, were absent, because one of them was sick at that time. The court were poorly acquainted with the Latin tongue, in which the works of Pelagius were written, and John of Jerusalem, one of the principal bishops, was prejudiced in favour of Origenism, and of Pelagius. The Eastern church itself was more corrupt in doctrine, and more inclined to support innovations than the Western; and the heresiarch himself, in capacity, presence of mind, and circumspection, far exceeded all his judges.

Yet the letter to the widow above mentioned was so fulsome, and so replete with self-righteous doctrine, that he found it necessary to deny, that he had written the things imputed to him. He had described her as the only right-

eous person upon earth, with whom piety found a refuge, when it could find none elsewhere; and he taught her to pray in this form: "Thou knowest, Lord, how holy, innocent, and clean these hands are which I extend to thee; how just and clean these lips, and free from all guile, with which I pray for thy mercy." In no part of his conduct did he lay himself more open to censure. He preached a perfection, attainable in this life, a perfection too, drawn altogether from nature. However, by denying this charge, and by dexterously evading and explaining away all the rest,* he obtained an honourable acquittal. If there was any fault at all in the conduct of Augustine toward this man, it was a fault indeed of the most amiable kind, an excess of tenderness and lenity. Pelagius knew how to take advantage of it, and produced to the court the short letter of the bishop of Hippo to him, which has been given above.

John, bishop of Jerusalem, defended Pelagius in the synod with great earnestness, and he was at last received as a Christian brother.

Flushed with his victory, he prepared to improve the advantage which it gave him. Though he was acquitted, as holding the doctrines of grace, and not as inimical to them, he wrote to a friend, that fourteen bishops had agreed with him, that man might be without sin, and easily keep the commands of God, if he would; counselling at the same time his confession of the necessity of divine grace, by which he had eluded condemnation. With similar artifices, he transmitted an account to Augustine of his acquittal. He wrote also four books on free-will, in which he openly took away original sin, and gloried at the same time in the acts of the synod of Palestine. And his partizans, being incensed against Jerom and the Roman ladies, who lived in monasteries under his direction in Palestine, made a scandalous assault upon them, of which Jerom complained to Innocent of Rome, who afterwards expostulated with John, bishop of Jerusalem, for conniving at the burnings and plunderings of which the Pelagians had been guilty. Augustine also wrote to John in a mild but firm tone, to undeceive him concerning the real doctrines of Pelagius; and

Pelagius defended by the bishop of Jerusalem.

* Gest. Pelag. The recital of the particulars would be tedious and uninteresting.

sent him both his own treatise on Nature and Grace, and that of Pelagius; and receiving afterwards the acts of the synod of Diospolis, he published the history of Pelagianism, from which we have taken many of the foregoing particulars.

A council being held the next year at Carthage, on various exigencies of the church, Orosius, returning from Palestine, brought them the letters of Heros and Lazarus against Pelagius. Though the acts of the Eastern council had not yet reached this African synod, yet they had now sufficient information to alarm their minds. The council wrote to Innocent of Rome their plain sense of the controversy, which was—that unless Pelagius and his partizans, in express terms rejected the sentiments ascribed to him, they should be excommunicated, to prevent others from being imposed on by false pretensions.*

These equitable determinations were signed by sixty-eight bishops. Another synod of Numidian bishops, assembled at Milevum, wrote also to Rome to the same effect. Augustine also, his friend Alypius, now bishop of Tagasta, Aurelius of Carthage, and two other bishops, wrote letters in their own names to Innocent, more distinctly explaining the subject, and showing how the Eastern council most probably had been imposed on by the subtlety of Pelagius; at the same time intimating their fear, lest Rome itself, where he had long lived, should be infected with the heresy. Innocent, in his answer, entered fully into the views of the Africans, and in the same conditional manner condemned the authors of the heresy. As it however still spread in a secret manner, it needed to be extirpated by argument.† For this the bishop of Hippo was peculiarly qualified. And for more than twenty years he was employed in writing and preaching against the heresy.

* I wonder not that the advocates for the papacy have argued from these frequent appeals to Rome, for the infallibility and dominion of the Pope. But the truth is, nothing could be further from the thoughts of the Africans. We shall see shortly that they withstand and correct the errors of a Roman bishop; nor have I seen any thing in Augustine's voluminous writings that indicates such a subjection. The word of God was as yet allowed to be the great standard of doctrine; and the frequent correspondence with Rome arose from the importance of the situation of that church as fixed in the metropolis of the Empire, and as being the centre of intelligence to the Christian world.

The two heresiarchs now endeavoured to elude the force of the decrees against them. Cœlestius, who had been in Asia for some time, and had obtained the office of presbyter, visited Rome in the year 417.

Cœlestius comes to Rome,

A. D. 417.

He applied to Zozimus, the successor of Innocent, and recited his libel before him. And here, with an unlimited degree of complaisance, he submitted his sentiments implicitly to the bishop of Rome, professing a desire to be corrected by him, if as a man he erred in any point, and complained of the precipitation with which he had been condemned.

Zozimus, deceived by his artifices, wrote to the African prelates, complaining of the malice of the Gaulish bishops, and declaring, that unless within two months he heard more decisive proofs against Cœlestius, he should consider him as a Christian brother. The African bishops, in reply, complained of the precipitation of Zozimus, and at length sent to Rome such complete proofs against Cœlestius, that he withdrew himself from the examination, and avoided the means of a public detection. Zozimus however still delayed his condemnation, for which he is justly blamed by Augustine.*

Pelagius, using the same methods which Cœlestius did, wrote to Innocent, with whose death he was unacquainted. Some fragments of his letters are preserved by Augustine. A sample of them is as follows: "Lo, let this epistle clear me before you, in which I say that we have a free-will to sin and not to sin, which in all good works is always helped by divine aid." And "this power we say is in all in general, in Christians, Jews, and Gentiles. In all there is free-will equally by nature, but in Christians alone is it helped by grace. In others there is a good condition, naked and unarmed; in those who belong to Christ, it is fortified by his assistance. Persons therefore are to be condemned, who, when they have free-will, by which they might come to faith, and obtain the grace of God, abuse their liberty; but those are to be rewarded, who, using free-will aright, obtain the favour of God, and keep his commands." He adds more to the same purpose, never once either admitting the doctrine of original sin, or defining what he means by divine assist-

* B. 2. to Bonif. c. 3.

ance, which with him may mean no more than the benefit of external revelation, or the preservation of our natural powers. Had he once expressly declared, that he did not believe any real influence of divine grace on the mind inclining it to what is good, which he knew the Christian world before his time believed, and which if he himself had believed, he would have expressed; there would have been an honesty in his heretical pravity, which would have entitled his character to a greater degree of respect. As the case stands, and, as he must have known that his opponent used the terms grace and divine assistance in a quite different sense from that in which he used them, he appears by his own words to have been as insincere disputant. He sent also to Rome a symbol of his faith, written in the same style of ambiguity, and attended with the same adulatory strains to the bishop of Rome, which Celestius had used on the like occasion.

Zozimus, to whom his letters came, was imposed on by them, as he had been by those of Celestius; and he wrote to the African bishops, that he was convinced, that Pelagius was innocent. The latter answered him very properly, that it was not sufficient for Pelagius and Celestius to own in general that they approved of all that he approved of; that it subjected them expressly to confess, that we need the grace of Jesus Christ, not only to know, but also to do righteousness in every act. Thus they showed that they had, what Zozimus had not, a clear and accurate conception of the subject. But they had Augustine among them; whereas men, whose consciences have had little exercise on these subjects, are seldom quick in comprehending them, nay, are apt to be imposed on by plausible terms, though they be in other respects men of enlarged and cultivated understandings.

Zozimus was, however, open to conviction; for the bishops of Rome had not yet learned to be INFALLIBLE. The insinuations of Augustine corrected his mistakes, and being further acquainted with the subject by some writings of Pelagius, which were brought to him at Rome, he openly condemned the two heretics. Whether he had done so or not, there is not the slightest ground to believe, that the African bishops and churches would not have persevered, by their own authority, in rejecting Pelagianism: but the concurrence of the bishop of Rome was

doubtless of great service to the general cause of Christian truth at this period. It has often been said, that men called heretics have not the advantage of being heard, because their writings are not extant. I have therefore been solicitous to furnish the reader with all the light which can be obtained on that side of the question. Notwithstanding the scantiness of materials, Arius I think was sufficiently proved guilty from his own mouth, and so was Pelagius; but of the latter we have much larger remains. On this occasion it will be proper to mention a passage from his exposition of the Epistle to the Romans, quoted by Zozimus, as it shows at the same time the strength of his prejudices and the shrewdness of his understanding. "If Adam's sin hurt those who were not guilty, the righteousness of Christ profits those who believe not."

The Pelagians bitterly censured Sixtus, a presbyter of Rome, afterwards bishop, for being active in condemning those whom before he had patronized. Augustine exposed their unreasonableness in reviling that very lenity and caution which had been so slow to condemn, till the fullest evidence was obtained, and admonished Sixtus not to be content with anathematizing Pelagius, but to be also laborious in warning and teaching the people.

The Emperor Honorius also passed the sentence of banishment from Rome on the Pelagians the same year in which their doctrines were condemned, that is, the year 418. Celestius retired to Constantinople, where his tenets were opposed by Atticus the bishop, and his views of propagating them were disappointed. The party were, however, indefatigable; letters were written to the bishop of Thessalonica, in which they professed their desire to defend the Catholic faith against the heresy of the Manichees, and in that specious manner they vindicated their praises of the powers of human nature. Augustine answered their arguments, which had been sent by eighteen of the party to Thessalonica;* Atticus also wrote against them to Rome, and the sect underwent a general condemnation.

Pelagius, who was still in Palestine, complained of the treatment which he had received, and being interrogated there

Pelagians
banished
by Honorius,

A. D. 418.

* B. 1. to Boniface.

concerning the disputed points by some persons of respectable characters, he answered with such subtle ambiguity, that he again imposed on his examiners, who explained to Augustine in writing the result. The latter, roused by repeated acts of dissimulation, wrote his treatise on Original Sin and the Grace of Christ, in which he detected and exposed the artifices of Pelagius. The wiles of the party were not yet exhausted; they charged the general Church with condemning marriage, and the workmanship of God in the creation of man; I suppose maliciously deducing those consequences from the doctrine of original sin; and this drew another reply from the argumentative pen of Augustine.*

One Julian, a young person of great spirit and self-confidence, now arose in defence of Pelagianism, and wrote with great vehemence and asperity, and in a very voluminous manner. He described himself as the little David, who was to fight against the Goliath of Hippo, and declared that it was proper to decide the contest by a single combat, while the rest of the church should be in peace. I love to lay open to the reader all-along the connection between principle and practice; and, if I show not the indisputable superiority of the orthodox Christians, in disposition and temper, I miss one of the most important points, which I have in view through the whole history. Indeed the strength and excellence of Augustine's cause lies in its tendency to promote humility, while the weakness and turpitude of the Pelagian cause lies in supporting the spirit of pride. How can this be shown better than by proving from facts, that the Pelagians were proud men, and that those who sincerely embraced the doctrines of grace were humble. To the boasting language of Julian, Augustine modestly replied, "Who promised you a single combat on my side? Where, when, how, who were present, who the arbiters? Far be it from me to assume to myself in the general church, what you are not ashamed to do among the Pelagians. I am one of the many who refute your profane novelties as we can." The most specious argument used by Julian was the use made of the impe-

rial sanction against his party. How far the secular arm ought to be applied to the support of religion, has been already considered; and it was the duty of the magistrate then, as at all times, to determine how far the good of the people committed to his charge is connected with the spreading of opinions. I recollect, however, no account of any particular cruelties; nor does any thing more seem to have been actually done against the Pelagians by the state, than barely to inhibit the dissemination of their doctrines.*

Another argument used by Julian was drawn from the pains taken by the adversaries of Pelagius to seduce the people. Finding the vulgar every where prejudiced against the Pelagians, he speaks of the dregs of the populace stirred up against them, mariners, cooks, butchers, &c.:† but this is no uncommon event. The doctrines of grace, persecuted and despised as they always have been by the great, bid fair for a more unprejudiced hearing among the poor. The common people heard our Lord gladly. The doctrines, which represent the misery of man and his need of grace, speak to the consciences of men; and those, whom deceitful learning and vain philosophy have not sophisticated, cannot but receive some impression. Pelagianism, so far as it respects the doctrines of sanctifying grace, is pretty much the same thing with that which is now called Socinianism. The abettors of the latter make the same complaints of the common people at this day; and they may thank themselves for the desertion of their congregations. Julian inscribed his writings to one Turbantius, a bishop, whom he highly commends; but this bishop afterwards forsook Pelagianism.

Notwithstanding the emperor's sentence in 418, Celestius ventured again to show himself in Rome, and about the year 420 was again expelled by an edict. Pelagianism being now reduced to the lowest ebb, Satan seems to have changed his mode of attacking the church, by inducing

Celestius
expelled
Rome by
an edict,
A. D. 420.

* B. I. de nup. † B. 6. contra Julian.
Apud Catholicos. In general I choose to avoid the expression of Catholics, and prefer the term general church as more proper, in opposition to the unfair use made of the word by the Papists.

* I have rather laid down the principles on which the civil power should act in a case of this nature, than given any opinion of the rectitude or impropriety of its conduct in the case of the Pelagians. Let the reader judge for himself: the labours of the ecclesiastics in councils and writings stand on a very different foundation.

† Aug. contra Julian, B. 2.

some ignorant persons, under a mistaken idea of honouring the doctrines of grace, to support opinions subversive of the free agency of man, and particularly to forbid men to rebuke sinners, and direct them only to pray for their conversion.* Augustine obviated these mistakes, and explained the consistency between the divine grace and human duty in his treatise on Rebuke and Grace.

The two heresiarchs, after this, were reduced to a state which is of all others the most grating to proud minds, a state of obscurity. The island of Britain, it is certain, was afterwards disturbed with their doctrines, which, by the skill and authority of Germanus, whom we shall have occasion to mention hereafter, were refuted and overcome. Hence it is probable, that Pelagius, after having travelled through the Roman empire, and attempted in vain to overturn the doctrines of grace, retired to his native country. But nothing certain seems to be known further, either concerning him or Celestius.

There was a person named Leporius, a monk, afterwards a presbyter, who boasted of his purity, and ascribed it to his own power, and not to the grace of God. The man, however, was instructed by some teachers in Gaul, and particularly by the labours of Augustine, to know himself better. In Africa he publicly owned the folly of his pride, and wrote also into Gaul a very humble confession of his self-righteousness. I know not how to obtain a sight of his writings; but they would probably give us an edifying view of the conversion of a Pharisee.†

If Satan cannot gain his point entirely, in aspersing the grace of God, he will be content to do it in part. And this, for the trial of men's sincerity, was unhappily the case in regard to this present controversy. Pure Pelagianism itself was lost at least for many ages: not did any man dare, for a long series of years, to revive it. The works of Augustine were found so agree-

able to the Scriptures, that while they were regarded as the sole standard of Christian authority, a doctrine which set aside the necessity of grace altogether, could gain no hearing in the church. And in the Western world such an addition of light was obtained, as no doubt proved highly serviceable to advance the kingdom of Christ. But tares were sown: Semi-Pelagianism arose, and maintained itself among many, and continues to this day the admired system of all those who seek to unite the arts of secular greatness with some regard for Christian orthodoxy. Its language is, that though man cannot persevere in virtue without divine grace, yet he can turn himself at first to God. Vitalis of Carthage, seems to have been its beginner, who taught that our obedience to the Gospel was no otherwise the effect of grace, than that men cannot believe, except the word be preached to them. Thus, external revelation was put in the room of the secret, effectual energy of the Holy Spirit. The Pelagians, who had lost their first ground, retreated hither, and maintained, that grace was given according to that merit of men, which they showed in attending to the word and to prayer. Some presbyters in Marseilles were at the head of this scheme, which is so specious, and carries such an air of moderation between vicious extremes, that it seems folly to oppose it by any other arms than those of Scripture and experience. Men, who know themselves, and suffer the decisions of the divine word to prevail over their consciences, will see through the delusion, which can scarcely fail to overcome all whose religion is theory without conscience.

John Cassian, a Scythian, a monk of eminence, and a man much renowned at that time, was the pillar of this doctrine. He lived at Marseilles, and opposed the bishop of Hippo. Prosper and Hilary withstood him, and some monuments of the writings of the former will afterwards be considered. In consequence of their desires, Augustine wrote his two last books on Predestination, and the gift of perseverance. Still, however, the contest between Semi-Pelagianism, and the adversaries to it, continued some time; Cassian labouring on one side, and Prosper and Hilary on the other.

Such was the rise, progress, and consequences of this most important heresy in the Church of Christ. THERE MUST

INDEED BE HERESIES IN THE CHURCH, THAT

* See Mosheim. Vol. I. Quarto Edit. p. 189. It is not the business of a history to enlarge on the theological, moral difficulties with which Pelagianism is necessarily connected. I shall only here refer the reader to Edwards's masterly treatise on Free-will, which I think has not yet been answered. Had Mosheim better understood the grounds of the subject of human liberty, he would not so rashly have charged Augustine with inconsistency.

† Cassian, B. I. de Incar. Christi.

THEY WHICH ARE APPROVED MAY BE MADE MANIFEST. The effects of them are, that the wicked in the church are more distinctly separated from the godly; the former are made worse, or at least appear so to be; the latter are purified and made white, and every way improved, both in the understanding, spirit, and power of true religion. Let frivolous controversies, which involve no nutrimental truths of godliness, be hushed and buried in oblivion, as soon as possible, because they are incapable of producing any thing but strife and vanity. But it was indefensible in Mosheim to lament over the Pelagian disputes, as erroneous on both sides, when in truth the controversy was the same which has ever been between holy men and mere men of the world; between grace and human merit;* and though in Augustine's time the question turned principally upon sanctification, in Luther's time on justification, yet the glory of God in the grace of Jesus Christ, the importance of genuine faith, and the nature and efficacy of the influences of the Holy Ghost, were equally concerned in the controversy between Augustine and Pelagius, between Luther and the Papists, and I will venture to say, on scriptural grounds, between Paul the Apostle and Saul of Tarsus,—that is, between the spirit and doctrine of an humbled publican, and of a self-righteous Pharisee.

CHAPTER IV.

PELAGIAN DOCUMENTS.

THE question, "Whether man needs the influence of the Holy Spirit to render him truly pious and holy, or he has sufficient resources in his own nature for this end," involves so much of the very essence and genius of Christianity, that compared with it a thousand other objects of debate in the church are reduced to mere insignificance. For on the right resolution of this question will depend, what ideas we ought to form of the Christian doctrines of original sin, regeneration, salvation by the grace of Jesus Christ,

and sanctification by the Holy Ghost. All parties are convinced that men ought to be good and virtuous; but does it therefore follow that the Pelagian opinions on these points imply no more than a mere nominal difference of system? So men are always willing to represent the subject, who have no sense of innate depravity. But those who feel themselves "tied and bound with the chain of their sins," will think it of essential importance to inquire, how they may be freed from this state; nor can they be contented with the external decencies of morality, while they find themselves void of the love of God and internal holiness. The Scripture decides this controversy clearly and amply; but it is my business to state as faithfully as I can the sentiments of the ancient church upon it. Till Pelagius arose, the necessity of internal efficacious grace was not disputed. He denied the existence of such a principle altogether; though, as we have seen, with much artificial equivocation. I must do justice to both parties; and review briefly, yet clearly, the sentiments of those who distinguished themselves in the controversy. One conclusion to be drawn from the whole is this, that as there is no new thing under the sun, so the Lord raises up from age to age, men to defend his real truths in the world.

I shall begin with taking some notice of a treatise found in the works of Ambrose, which I omitted in the review of his writings, because, both the difference of style, and the reference in it to the Pelagian controversy, which was after his time, demonstrate it not to be his. Much has been said* to determine who was the author of it. Its title is, *OF THE VOCATION OF ALL THE GENTILES*. Whoever wrote it,† he was evidently a person well versed in Scripture, master of a good style, and well skilled in argumentation. As he has exhibited that moderate view of the doctrine of grace, which I think most agreeable to Scripture, and remarkably coincident with the doctrines of the Church of England, it will be proper to mention his leading thoughts, as a suitable introduction to the rest.

Ambrose
on the Vo-
cation of
the Gen-
tiles.

* See Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. page 57, compared with page 278, Quarto Edit. Vol. I. That he, who in one place maintains the importance of justification by faith, should in another despise the controversies occasioned by it, seems a great and manifest inconsistency.

* See Du Pin's elaborate criticism in his Hist. of Cent. V.

† It seems, however, to have been the production of this century.

He begins, like a man of deep reflection, conscious of the difficulties which his subject involves: "A great and arduous question," says he, "is agitated between the defenders of Free-will and the preachers of the Grace of God. It is inquired, whether God would have all men to be saved! and as this is undeniable, it is further inquired, why the will of the Almighty is not fulfilled!—Thus, no limit is found of contrary disputations, while men do not distinguish what is manifest from what is secret." He describes the effects of the Fall as destructive of faith, hope, understanding, and will, for the purposes of holiness and salvation; and he affirms, that no man has any resources for deliverance; because, though by natural understanding he may endeavour to oppose his vices, and may, in an outward way, adorn this temporal life, yet he cannot proceed to true virtue and eternal bliss. "For without the worship of God, what seems to be virtue, is sin, and cannot please God." "—Let no man trust in human strength, which, even when entire, stood not; but let him seek victory by Him, who alone is invincible, and conquered for all. And if he seeks, let him not doubt but that the desire of seeking has been received from Him whom he seeks.—He goes on to quote the well-known passages from the prophets, concerning the effectual grace of God. "For he writes his laws on their hearts, that they may receive the knowledge of God, not by man's teaching, but by the instruction of the great Teacher, because neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.—To this day is fulfilled what the Lord promised to Abraham without condition, and gave without law.—And those who obey not the Gospel are the more inexcusable; but it is certain that they are not according to the foreknowledge of God the sons of Abraham. He promised that these should obey, when he said, I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. He promised that they should persevere, when he said, I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me."

He takes particular notice of the direction, in the first Epistle to Timothy, of praying for all men without exception;

and observes, that it was regarded in all Christian assemblies; and that the church prayed not only for the regenerate, but for all, even the worst of characters. "And, what she prayed for them was doubtless, that they might be converted. And, as conversion was what it was not in their power to do for themselves, the merciful and just Lord would have us to pray for all, that where we see innumerable persons recovered from such an abyss of evil, we may not doubt that God has performed these great things; and praising him for what he has done, may hope he will still do the same for those who are yet in darkness. As for those, for whom the prayers of the church are not heard, we ought to refer it to the secrets of Divine Justice. We know but in part. O the depth!—"

Thus does this judicious Divine resolve into human ignorance the great difficulty which has agitated men of thought in all ages. Whoever is disposed to do the same will have no objection to admit the doctrine of election in *THIS SENSE*; nor is any other submission of the understanding required, than that reasonable one which bishop Butler so admirably enforces in his Analogy. "The redemption of Christ, he observes, would be looked on in a mean light, if Justification, which is by grace, were made to depend on previous merits.—If then grace find some of the vilest characters, whom it adopts in the very departure out of life, when yet many, who seem less guilty, are void of this gift, who can say this is without the dispensation of God!" And he goes on to prove salvation to be of mere grace altogether, by a happy arrangement of Scripture passages.

"If it be asked, why the Saviour of all men has not given this sensation to all to know the true God and his Son Jesus Christ,—what God hath secreted from us should not be investigated; what he hath manifested should not be denied. No genius whatever can discover the reasons of the divine dispensation in these things. Doubtless, however, the whole good of man, from the beginning of faith to the consummation of perseverance, is a divine work and gift." Yet he demonstrates, that men's departure from God is the consequence of their own will, and not properly the act of a divine constitution. And he proves from Scripture likewise, that Christ died for all men, and that he

* See Article XIII. of the Church of England.

is so to be preached to all the world.* He maintains,† on the whole, three propositions: 1st, That it is the property of the Divine Goodness to desire that all may be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. 2d, That every one who is saved is directed by the grace of God, and by the same grace kept unto the end. The 3d modestly protests, that not all the plan of the divine will can be comprehended, and that many causes of divine works are above human understanding. "If insidious malignity will stop, if insolent presumption will demur, these things being firmly established, we need not distract ourselves with endless questions."

But enough has been said to give the reader an idea of this author, whose thoughts and views of Scripture are greatly superior to those of the fourth and fifth centuries in general. Whosoever he was, he seems to have taken up his pen toward the close of the Pelagian controversy in a modest and temperate spirit.

So exactly are his sentiments coincident with those of the best and wisest in all ages of Christianity, that we may see the great benefit resulting to the church, in the event, from the Pelagian controversy; and while we look at the writings of the rest, his ideas will stand as a model, solid and scriptural.

St. Peter tells us of those who privately bring in damnable heresies.‡ In Pelagius this insidiousness we have observed to be very remarkable: but it seems a common character of heresy. A free and open and consistent support of what is believed to be true is as common a mark of genuine orthodoxy. I shall attempt, however to lay before the reader, so far as the deceitfulness of the man and the scantiness of materials will afford, a view of Pelagianism from Pelagius's own mouth. Some of the documents have been glanced at in the course of the history already. Besides these, he wrote, in imitation of Cyprian, a treatise of Testimonies. Jerom gives an account of this work, and from him it appears, that it contained the same things which were objected to him in the Palestine synod. He wrote also some short notes on St. Paul's Epistles, doubtless with a view to accommodate them to his own system. I have repeatedly to regret, that the works of the Fathers have come down to

us so highly injured by fraud. Here is a remarkable instance: some short notes on St. Paul's Epistles are subjoined to Jerom's undoubted comments, which were certainly not written by Jerom, an open Anti-Pelagian, but must have been written by Pelagius himself, or some genuine disciple of his. They agree with the account, which Augustine gives of Pelagius's work of this sort; and certainly St. Paul's expression, in the ninth of the Romans, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth," is interpreted in the Pseudo-Jerom exactly as Augustine tells us Pelagius interpreted it.* On the passage, "without the law sin was dead," the commentator asserts, they are mad who assert that sin is derived to us from Adam. Nor will he allow, that Adam and Christ introduced, the one sin, the other righteousness into the world, in any other sense than by example. He all along supports that forced interpretation. On the passage, "by the offence of one many be dead," he observes, because not only sinners, but righteous men also die by a common and natural death. What St. Paul speaks of concupiscence he will allow to be understood only of depraved habit; and in the seventh of Romans maintains that St. Paul speaks in an assumed character. The works of the law which cannot justify, he maintains to be circumcision and the other rites of the Mosaic law, and not moral works. And the grace derived from Christ, he contends to be his example. Something he allows of grace in the forgiveness of sins, nothing in the effectual work of sanctification. Charity, he observes, is from ourselves: and he maintains also, that real saints are perfect and spotless. Predestination also he excludes, except what is founded on the foreknowledge of men's faith and obedience.

Thus it appears that heresies are re-

* B. de Gest. Pelag. c. xvi.—See Jansenius, B. 1.—Pelagius said, that it was to be understood as spoken by an adversary, that the Apostle was personating one who was finding fault, and asking how St. Paul's doctrine of free-will could stand, since it does not depend on him that wills or runs, but on God that showeth mercy. Thus is St. Paul made to defend a doctrine quite opposite to the whole current of his argument; and that which he really maintained is put into the mouth of an adversary. However strained and unnatural the interpretation be, it has been equalled by modern Pelagians, who are commonly called Socinians.

* B. 2. c. vi.

† C. x.

‡ 2 Peter ii. 1.

vived, from age to age, with new names, and under new dresses, carrying the appearance of something original, and not allowed to be the same things which had been long ago exposed and refuted. For how often have we heard all this, which appears to be real Pelagianism, maintained in our own times!*

The last treatise, which we have reviewed, was probably that of Pelagius altogether, or certainly it belonged to some of his disciples, and is itself a sufficient proof, that his tenets were not misrepresented by his antagonists.† Further proofs, however, of what Pelagianism is, drawn from the writings of its own defender, remain to be considered.

There is, in the fourth volume of Jerom's works, which indeed consists of treatises by various authors, an explanation of a creed, ascribed to Damasus, which, by its agreement with divers citations from it by Augustine, in the most exact manner, appears to belong to Pelagius, and it is worthy of his subtlety. He mentions the common articles of faith, and then enumerates various heresies, which all the church condemns; and, among the rest, "the blasphemy of those, who say, that anything impossible is commanded to man by God. We so confess free-will, that we say we always need the assistance of God, and these are equally in error, who say that man cannot sin, with those who say he cannot avoid sin. For both take away the liberty of the will. But we say, that man always can sin and not sin, that we may confess that we are always free in our wills. This is the faith, blessed father, (Damasus, of Rome) which we have learned in the Catholic church, which we have always held and do hold. In which, if there is any position less skilful and less cautious, we desire to be corrected by you." The fault of the creed is certainly not want of caution, but the excess of it. Under the specious term of freedom of will, in which natural and moral inability are confounded, as if they were the same thing, he undermined the essential doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit, though

in a very covert manner; and asserted with an audacity almost unparalleled, that he had learned his creed in the Catholic church, which had at all times hitherto expressly owned the doctrines of grace and the fall of man, while he himself appears not to have believed either the one or the other, and was labouring with all his might to eradicate both from the Christian world.

But let the reader judge for himself what the real sentiments of this ambiguous politician were, from a work undoubtedly his, by his own confession.* I mean the letter to Demetrius, and which is falsely ascribed to Jerom. As it is much too long to quote, I shall select such parts as tend most decisively to show the real religious opinions of this heresiarch, which have been much misrepresented in our times.

"To DEMETRIUS, a Virgin;

"If, in dependence on the greatest genius and equal knowledge, I should think myself capable of writing, yet I could not enter on so arduous a task without great fear. However, I must write to Demetrius, a virgin of Christ, noble and rich, and what is greater than these, one who tramples on nobility and riches by the ardour of faith—who, sprung from the noblest family, and brought up in the greatest wealth and delicacies, hath suddenly broke from the most tenacious blandishments of life, who hath cut down the flower of youth by the sword of faith, that is, by her will. But it is difficult to treat with such a character, in which there is so great a desire of learning, and so great ardour for perfection, that any doctrine, however perfect, can scarcely equal her merit. We write at the entreaty of her holy mother. As often as I have to speak of the plan of a holy life, I use first to show the powers of human nature, and what it really can do, and thence to encourage the mind of the hearer to press after virtue, lest it should be of no service to call men to that which they have presumed to be impossible. For hope is the spring and source of all activity in the road of virtue. If persons despair, their efforts flag entirely. The resources of nature are therefore to be declared, that men may press toward the mark of perfection, lest, while men are unconscious of their inherent powers,

* *Idem* B. I.

† Since I wrote the above, I have seen the *Revised edition of Augustine's Works*, and find these Pelagian Notes in the last volume, which the editors, without bestidion, ascribe to Pelagius.

† *Idem* B. I. vii.

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* Jerom's 4th, tom. V.

they think they have not what they really have. Let this be the foundation of a spiritual life, that the virgin may know her own strength, which she may then exercise well, when she has learned that she has it. First, then, measure the goodness of human nature from its Author, who, when he made all things very good, must have made man perfectly so. Let man learn to know the dignity of his nature, when he sees strong animals placed in subjection to him. God would have him to be a volunteer, not a slave; and therefore he left him in the hand of his own counsel. Take care you stumble not on the rock of the ignorant vulgar; and do not think that man was created evil, because he can do evil. In the freedom of the will all the honour and dignity of nature consist; and from the same principle originates the praise of every good man. There would be no virtue in man, if he could not pass to evil. Man could not practise goodness spontaneously, were it not equally in his power to do evil. But most persons impiously, no less than ignorantly, find fault as it were with the divine workmanship. The goodness of nature is so apparent, that it shows itself even among Gentiles. How many virtuous philosophers have we read and heard of! whence their goodness, were not nature good? How much more virtuous may Christians be, who have Christ's instructions, and the assistance of divine grace.*

He goes on to speak of the virtues of Abel, Enoch, Melchizedec, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job, and describes them as all derived from the natural powers of man, "that you may understand, how great is the goodness of nature." He proceeds to deny the apostasy and depravity of nature in the fullest manner, asserting, "that the only cause which makes it difficult to do well, is the force of bad habit." "Now, if before the law, and long before the coming of our Saviour Christ, men led holy lives, how much more after his coming are they able to do it." He speaks of the grace of Christ, expiation by his blood, and encourage-

ment derived from his example; but he only just mentions these things, without insisting on them. "Why do we loiter and blame the infirmity of nature? He would not command us what is impossible." Some rules of morality, which are indeed the best part of the letter, lose their efficacy, because the writer laid the foundation of them all in pride and self-sufficiency.

Augustine and his friend Alypius being both together at Hippo, received a letter from Juliana, the mother of Demetrias, who acknowledges the receipt of their letter, warning against heresies. She thanks them for the admonition, but appears to insinuate that it was unnecessary to her family, which had never been infected with any heresy. She seems to mean the errors relating to the Trinity, and to have had no clear idea of the Pelagian heresy, then new in the world. These two charitable pastors having heard of the letter which had been sent to Demetrias, thought it right to detect the poison contained in it more fully, by a reply:†

"Your words oblige us not to be silent concerning those who labour to corrupt what is sound—nor is it a small error, for men to think they have in themselves whatever is obtained of righteousness and piety; and that God helps us no further than by the light of revelation; and that nature and doctrine are the only grace of God. To have a good will, and to have love, the queen of virtues, they say our own arbitration suffices. But what says the Apostle? **THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY GHOST, WHICH IS GIVEN TO US,** that no man may think he has it from himself. I find in the same letter of Pelagius to Demetrias these words:‡ 'You have therefore something on account of which you may be preferred to others, for nobility and opulence are rather of your family than of you; but spiritual riches none can confer on you, but yourself. In these you are justly to be praised, in these deservedly to be preferred to others, which cannot be but from yourself and in yourself.'§ True it is, they must be in

Remarkable letter of Augustine and his friend Alypius.

* Augustine teaches us what Pelagius means by grace, as we shall see elsewhere. Certain it is, that he never allows it to mean the operation of sanctifying influences. The whole current of the letter before us, denying the evil nature of man as a lapsed creature, and asserting the sufficiency of man in his own powers, is opposed to such a sentiment.

• Id. 12.

† They are the very same in the foregoing letter, but I omitted to quote the part.

‡ Pelagius followed the maxims of philoso-

you; but to say they are from you, is poison. Far be the virgin of Christ from bearing these things, who piously knows the poverty of the human heart, and therefore knows not how to be adorned but with the gifts of her spouse. Let her rather hear the Apostle: I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ; but I fear, lest as the serpent beguiled Eve, &c.* In every thing give thanks. Ye do so, because ye have it not of yourselves. For who hath distinguished you from Adam, the mass of death and perdition? Was it not he who came to seek and save the lost? When the Apostle says, who made thee to differ? does he answer, my good will, my faith, my righteousness? does he not say, what hast thou that thou hast not received? We hope, considering the humility in which Demetrias was educated, that when she read the words which I quoted from the letter, if she have read them, she sighed, smote her breast, and perhaps wept, and prayed, that as these were not her words, so neither might they be her creed, that she might glory, not in herself, but in the Lord. We well know how sound you are in the doctrine of the Trinity, but there are evils of another kind than those which affect that article of the Christian faith, evils which injure the glory of the whole Trinity. If you narrowly observe, though the writer speaks of grace, he does it with guarded ambiguity; it may mean nature, or doctrine, or forgiveness of sins, or the example of Christ. But find, if you can, one word that owns a positive influence of the Holy Spirit on the mind, actually imparting the power of loving God; gladly would we see such a confession in some much-admired writers; but as yet we could never discover it."

From these two Epistles the state of the Pelagian controversy appears. The heretic, though little inclined to regard grace in any sense, did not deny that forgiveness of sins might be granted; but as he denied the corruption of nature, he could never think sin to be so sinful as the word of God describes it. He dwelt

on the grace of Scripture revelation, and the example of Christ; but he loved to expatiate most freely on the powers of nature itself. But grace, as it means the gift of the Holy Spirit, renewing and sanctifying the will, he denied altogether. Augustine defended this as an essential of godliness, and therefore it appears always prominent on the face of the Pelagian controversy. It was a point of the utmost consequence; for it draws along with it all the other essential doctrines.

In the works of Ambrose* we have another letter, under the name of Ambrose, addressed to the same virgin Demetrias: it seems written in the latter times of the controversy, and could not therefore be a letter of Ambrose. Probably it was written by the anonymous

Another letter to Demetrias.

author of the treatise on the Calling of the Gentiles. Certainly it resembles his manner both in style and sentiment; and a few quotations from it will deserve to be inserted here. He appears to have seen, in perfect harmony with Augustine, that the real stress of the controversy lay, not in a speculative set of doctrines, but in the solid provision made for humility. The doctrine of efficacious grace provides for this, Pelagianism excludes it. And on this single point the whole merit of the controversy may safely be made to depend. "There must," he observes, "be an uniting grace, which confederates and harmonizes the multifold unity of the saints and their beautiful variety. This grace is true humility. In various duties there are various degrees of virtue: but in genuine humility every thing is solid and indivisible, and therefore it makes all its subjects to be one, because it admits of no inequality. The peculiarity then of this grace lies in the confession of the grace of God, which is wholly rejected, unless it be wholly received.—That man ejects himself out of grace, who distrusts its fulness, as if man needed the help of God in one part, and did not need it in another part of his actions; as if any moment could be assigned, in which it would not be ruinous to him to be deprived of the Holy Spirit. He, indeed, in the essence of the Deity, is every where, and all-comprehensive; but is conceived in a certain manner to recede from those, whom he ceases to govern. And the cessation of his aid is to be con-

phers, not of the Scriptures. Horace says, *supremum mihi annum ipse parabo*. But I might quote passages without end from the classic authors to the same purpose, whom numbers called Christian since the time of Pelagius have followed. What is this but to call Paganism Christianity?

* 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.

* Ep. lxxiv. p. 135.

ceived as his absence, which that man madly thinks to be useful to himself, who rejoices in his good actions, and thinks that he rather than God hath wrought them. The grace of God must therefore be owned in the fullest and most unqualified sense; the first office of which is, that his help be felt.* We have not received, says the Apostle, the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Whence, if any man think that he has any good things of which God is not the author, but himself, he has not the Spirit of God, but of the world, and swells with that secular wisdom, of which it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise.—Amidst all the evils of men, to glory in our own intellects, instead of divine illumination, in knowing God, and to be elated in ourselves at the expense of the divine glory, is most dangerous. To desire to be preferred before all, is mischievous; much more so to take a man's hope from the Lord, and fix it on himself. Is not this to fulfil that scripture, 'Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord.'† It is the very sin of the devil, which ejected him from heaven. And he drew our first parents into the same, causing them to rest in the liberty of their own will.—Men more easily guard against this pride in evil things; in virtues it is most studiously to be repelled, because he to whom praise seems due, is speciously ensnared by the temptation.—Satan, in this respect, has his eye peculiarly on the active, the sober, the chaste, and the virtuous; he would ruin them by the pride of self-sufficiency. Innumerable souls, and the churches in general, have withstood the infection of the new doctrine; but some souls have imbibed the poison. Hence the insidious commendation of human nature, and the defence of its original rectitude as ever preserved unblemished. Hence Adam's sin has been asserted to be noxious only by example; hence in fact the abolition of infant-baptism; hence the unsound confession of grace, as bestowed according to merit; hence the perfidy of owning, among us, the wounds of original sin, and of declaring, among their own partisans, that Adam hurt us only by example. But while the Lord Jesus says, the

whole need not a physician, but the sick, they, though silent, cry aloud in pride, We are whole, we need not a physician.—Consider what is done in regeneration, not looking only at the external sign, but also at the inward grace. Are not vessels of wrath changed into vessels of mercy? and men born not of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God? Says not Christ, without me ye can do nothing! Does any man say, that he abides in Christ, who doubts of Christ's working in him?—After quoting a number of very pertinent scriptures, he goes on: "Every godly motion of the illuminated mind is not to be separated from the human will, because man does nothing right, except what he does willingly; but a right intention of mind is the effect of the inspiration of the divine will. Other sins mar only the virtues to which they stand opposed; this of self-righteousness, while it assumes all, mars every thing. The image of God is genuine, when it is adorned with no other ornaments than what are received from the Heavenly Husband.—Humility and charity are kindred virtues, inseparably connected, inasmuch, that what St. Paul asserts of the latter,* may safely be predicated of the former.

The whole epistle is excellent, and a treasure of evangelical doctrine. But let us proceed to other monuments of antiquity.

The letter of the African council,† in which Aurelius, of Carthage, presided, and which was addressed to Innocent, of Rome, contains the following sentiments: "They (the Pelagians) attempt, by their praises of free-will, to leave no room for the grace of God, by which we are Christians, the Lord saying, if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. They assert, that the grace of God consists in this, that he hath so created the nature of man, that by his own will he can fulfil the law of God. The law itself too they reckon to belong to grace, because God hath given it for a help to men.—But the real grace of God, by which a man is caused to delight in the law after the inward man, they will not acknowledge, though they dare not openly oppose it. Yet, what else do they in effect, while they teach, that human nature is alone

A letter from the African Council.

* 1 Cor. ii.

† Jerem. xvii.

* 1 Cor. xiii.

† Ep. 90.

sufficient to enable men to obey the law? Not attending to the Scripture, 'it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy;' And, 'we are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves.' We beseech you to observe the necessary consequence of such opinions, namely, that we have no occasion, on their plan, to pray, that we enter not into temptation: nor had our Lord occasion to say to Peter, I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. He might have contented himself with exhorting or commanding him to keep his faith. And, instead of saying to his disciples, watch and pray, it would have sufficed to say, watch. When St. Paul prays, that the Ephesians might be strengthened with might in the inner man by his Spirit, they, in consistency with their plan, might have said, they might be strengthened with might, by the ability of nature reserved in our creation. It follows too, that infants need not to be baptized at all, as being perfectly innocent, and needing no redemption."

Innocent* agreed with the ideas of the council in his reply. We have next in order the letter of the Milevitanian council to the same Innocent,† in which Pelagianism is opposed in a similar manner, and a good use is made of the contrast between the first and second Adam, in the fifth chapter to the Romans. And from these and many other testimonies, it is evident that the great instrument by which Pelagius deceived men was, that he used the word *grace* in a sense which certainly is not scriptural. With him, whatever is the gift of God, is called *grace*; so that a man, who, by the use of his natural powers, in conjunction with the aid of the revealed will of God, should expect to please God, might be said to seek to be saved by *grace*; though it is certain, that the term in the New Testament is restrained to spiritual blessings.

Augustine, in conjunction with a few other bishops, wrote again to Innocent,‡ "Without doubt," says he, "the *grace* by which we are saved, is not that with which we are created. For if those bishops who acquitted Pelagius, had understood that he called that *grace*, which we have in common with

the wicked, and that he denied that which we have as Christians and sons of God, he would have appeared intolerable. I blame not then his judges, who understood the word *grace* in its common acceptation. Pelagius alone is not now our object; perhaps he is corrected; (I wish it may be the case;) but many souls are in danger of being beguiled. Let him be sent for to Rome, and asked what he means precisely by the term *grace*; or let him explain himself by letter; and if he be found to speak in the same manner as the church of Christ, let us rejoice in him. For whether he calls *grace* free-will, or remission of sins, or the precept of the law, he explains not that *grace* of the Holy Spirit, which conquers lusts and temptations, and which He who ascended into heaven has poured on us abundantly. He who prays, 'lead us not into temptation,' does not pray, that he may be a man, that he may have free-will, nor for the remission of sins, the subject of the former petition, nor that he may receive a command. Prayer itself then is a testimony of *grace*; and we shall rejoice that he is right, or corrected. Law and *grace* are to be distinguished: the law commands, *grace* bestows. If you will look into the book of Pelagius, given us by Timasius and Jacob,§ and take the trouble to examine the places, which we have marked, you will find, that to the objection made to him, that he denied the *grace* of God, he replies, that this *grace* was the nature in which God created us. If he disown the book, or those passages, we contend not, let him anathematize them, and confess in plain words the *grace* which Christian doctrine teaches, which is not nature, but nature saved; not by external doctrine, but by the supply of the Spirit and secret mercy. For though natural gifts may be called *grace*, yet that *grace*, by which we are predestinated, called, justified, glorified, is quite a different thing. It is of this the Apostle speaks, when he says, if by *grace*, then it is no more of works. And, to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. For if Christ had not died for our sins, Pelagius's possibility of nature, which he makes to be *grace*, would have been just the same."

But I must quote no more of this ex-

* 91.

† 92.

‡ 93.

§ He means the Synod at Lydda.

cellent epistle, in which the very hinge on which the controversy turned, is explained, and which affords an easy key to solve all the perplexities and ambiguities, with which the opposers of grace, ancient or modern, so much darken the subject.

Innocent agrees with Augustine, but writes not like a master of the subject. Indeed his importance in the controversy was rather founded on his local situation, than on any great character either of learning or piety.

In his letters to Sixtus, the Roman presbyter, Augustine answers Pelagian objections.* "They think that God is

Letters to
Sixtus.

by this means made a respecter of persons. They do not consider, that due punishment

is inflicted on the condemned, not due grace bestowed on the acquitted. But it is unjust, they say, that one be acquitted, the other punished in the same cause. Truly, it is just that both be punished. Who can deny it?" He goes on to quote Rom. ix.—"But why the Lord frees this man rather than that, let him examine, who can fathom the depth of divine judgment; but let him BEWARE OF THE PRECIPICE. In the mean time, to him, who lives as yet by faith, and sees but in part, it is enough to know or believe, that God frees none but by gratuitous mercy through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he condemns none but with the strictest truth by the same our Lord Jesus Christ."

Vitalis, of Carthage, though not a Pelagian by profession, taught that men were indebted to their own free-will for their conversion to God, and not to the operations of divine grace. Augustine† undertakes to convince him of his error, by pressing upon his conscience the duty confessed by Christians to be binding on all men who professed Christianity, namely, to pray for their fellow creatures; for infidels, that they might believe; for catechumens, that God would inspire them with a desire for regeneration; and for the faithful, that they may persevere. He shows, that the necessary consequence of Vitalis's sentiments was, that the pastors should content themselves with preaching the doctrine to men without praying for them, as he confined his idea of divine grace to the exhibition of the doctrine to mankind. He presses this argument on the conscience

of Vitalis, by giving repeated scriptural proof of the duty of praying for all sorts of men, which would be rendered altogether nugatory by the Pelagian sentiments.

The letter to Anastasius breathes an evangelical spirit of charity, distinguishes that Christian grace from the spirit of slavish fear, and in no mean degree leads the humbled soul from the Law to the Gospel, opposing, toward the close, the Pelagian pride, which, teaching man to trust in himself, mars the whole design of Christianity.* The whole is so excellent, that I am tempted to transcribe; but brevity must be studied, and it will be no contemptible fruit of my labour, if young theological students be incited to read such a Divine as Augustine for themselves.

Letter to
Anastasius.

In a small epistolary treatise concerning the Baptism of Infants,† he argues from the confessed antiquity and propriety of their baptism, admitted by Pelagians themselves, to the proof of the doctrine of original sin, and, toward the close, he thus rebukes the pretensions to perfection made by those heretics: "As to their affirming, that some men have lived or do live without sin, it were to be wished it were so; it is to be endeavoured, that it may be so; it is to be prayed, that it may be so; nor yet is it to be trusted, that it is so. For to those, who wish and strive and pray with just supplication, whatever remains of sin is daily remitted through this their cordial prayer, forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. Whoever asserts that this prayer is in this life unnecessary to any of the most holy persons, (I except the most HOLY ONE alone,) he greatly mistakes, and pays a compliment, I am persuaded, very unacceptable to him whom he commends. If he think himself to be such a one, 'he deceives himself, and the truth is not in him,' for no other reason but that he thinks falsely. The Physician, who is not needful for the whole, but for the sick, knows in his method of cure how to perfect us for eternal salvation, who does not even take away death, the wages of sin, from those whose sins he yet forgives, that even in their struggles

On Baptism of
Infants.

* Ep. 144.

† Ep. 16, of the Appendix to the Epist. Paris Edit.

to overcome the fear of it, they might undertake a contest for the sincerity of faith; and in some things he does not assist even his righteous ones to perfect righteousness, lest they should be lifted up; that so, while no man living is justified in his sight, we might be indebted constantly to him for forgiveness, and thank him for the same; and thus by holy humility be healed and recovered from that first cause of all vices, THE SWELLING OF PRIDE."

I may not dwell much on the larger treatises. The three books to Marcellinus against the Pelagians are the works of a master. In them he solidly confutes the idea of sinless perfection, and in answering their arguments, shows the nature of the controversy at that time. He defends the doctrine of original sin, and the custom of baptizing infants, and evinces the novelty of the Pelagian notion of man's original innocence since the fall.*

In his book of Nature and Grace he argues in much the same manner, and opposes a Pelagian writer, who extolled nature, and who found fault with those who charged their sin on the weakness of the human powers. In this treatise he observes, that Pelagianism appears to him to make a man forget why he is a Christian.† His two books,‡ written expressly against Pelagius, contain a shrewd answer to a shrewd adversary. Augustine's inaccurate notion of the term justification, confounding it with sanctification, appears very plainly in this treatise,§ of which more hereafter. In the same treatise appears also Pelagius's false notion of grace, as consisting in external revelation only. The heretic's idea of "power" from God, and of "will" from man, mentioned in the beginning of this treatise, is remarkably descriptive of his sentiments. Augustine's tract of Predestination and Grace is agreeable to his other works.¶ In the same volume are the epistles of Prosper and Hilary, concerning Semi-Pelagianism in Gaul. Their coincidence in sentiment with Augustine is apparent, and the rise of this heresy and its views are by them illustrated.

His observations on the good of perseverance show us his notion of this grace,

which seems, however, different from the account in the sixth and tenth chapters of St. John. On Perseverance.

Satan ever inclines men to extremes; and there were not wanting those, who, owning the doctrine of grace so strenuously preached by Augustine, began to think it wrong or absurd to rebuke men for sin. "If I act wrong, I am not to be blamed, but God is to be prayed to, to give me what he has not given me. It would be right to blame me, if, through my own fault, I were debarred of the power of doing good."

To answer these objections, and to show the consistency of the doctrines of grace with the use of means, exhortations, and endeavours, Augustine wrote his little tract of "Rebuke and Grace."* He cannot be said to have done full justice to

On Rebuke and Grace.

the subject: it required an accurate course of argumentation.† But the little which he says, is sufficient for serious and humble minds. The proud and the careless alone are overcome by such perversions as these which occasioned the tract. "O man, in precepts and commands, know what thou oughtest to possess; in rebukes, know that thou art disobedient through thy own fault; in prayer, know whence thou mayest receive what thou desirest."

"Thou art to be rebuked, because thou art not willing to be rebuked. Thou wouldst not have thy vices to be shown thee; thou wouldst not have them smitten, nor have the wholesome pain, that thou mightest seek the physician."

"This is the utility of rebuke, which is used salutarily, sometimes in a greater, sometimes in a less degree, according to the diversity of sins; and is then wholesome, when the supreme Physician pleases." He shows that original sin in itself deserves rebuke, that from the pain of rebuke the regenerated will may arise, if the person rebuked be a son of promise, "that while the rod of correction sounds outwardly, God within may work to will and to do by secret inspiration."

He shows the difference between the state of Adam, when perfect, and that of the best Christians while on earth.

* Tom. vi.

† See the subject fully, and as appears unanswerably, considered in Edwards's Free-will.

* Aug. opera. tom. vi.

† Tom. vi.

‡ Id.

§ p. 166.

¶ Id.

"They, though far less comfortable than he, because of the manifold conflict of the new and the old man, are nevertheless supplied with much stronger grace, even that of God made man, to emancipate them from their evils."

Jerom's writings against Pelagianism should now be considered. But of them it will suffice to say that he is no less than Augustine determined in his opposition to the heresy. His doctrine of grace is sound; and a humility of spirit highly adapted indeed to the subject, but very contrary to the natural temper of that choleric writer, appears. One short sentence deserves to be immortalized: *HÆC HOMINIBUS SOLA PERFECTIO, SI IMPERFECTOR SE ESSE NOVERINT.** "THIS IS THE ONLY PERFECTION OF MEN, TO KNOW THEMSELVES IMPERFECT."

CHAPTER V.

A SHORT VIEW OF AUGUSTINE'S "CITY OF GOD."

THE subject of this great work is so much of a piece with the history before us, the work itself is so remarkable a monument of genius, learning, and piety united, and deserves so well both of the classical scholar, and the theologian, that the reader will either expect some account of it, or at least excuse me, if I attempt it. Ecclesiastical antiquity has been too much depreciated in our times, and students in divinity have been discouraged from the study of the Fathers. In truth, a selection of them ought to be made; to praise or dispraise the primitive writers in general is obviously absurd. But Augustine's *City of God* deserves an unqualified commendation. The young student who shall meditate on it with deep attention, will find it richly to repay his labour; and the following review of its plan and contents may teach him what he is to expect from it.

The capture of Rome by Alaric the Goth, and the subsequent plunder and miseries of the imperial city, had opened the mouths of the Pagans to blaspheme the true God, and to accuse Christianity as the cause of the declension of the empire. However trifling such an argument may now appear, at that time it had so great weight, that it gave occasion to

Augustine, IN HIS ZEAL FOR THE HOUSE OF GOD, to write this treatise.

The work itself consists of twenty-two books. The first states the objections made by the Pagans, and answers them in form. It was a remarkable fact, that all who fled

to the church called the Basilica of the Apostles, whether Christians or not, were preserved from military fury. The author takes notice of this singular circumstance, as a proof of the great authority of the name and doctrine of Christ, even among Pagans, and shows that no instance can be found in their history, where many vanquished people were spared out of respect to their religious worship. He justly observes, therefore, that the evils accompanying the late disaster ought to be ascribed to the usual events of war, the benefits to the power of the name of Christ. His thoughts on the promiscuous distribution of good and evil in this life are uncommonly excellent.

"If all sin, he observes, were now punished, nothing might seem to be reserved to the last judgment. If the Divinity punished no sin openly now, his providence might be denied. In like manner, in prosperous things, if some petitions for temporal things were not abundantly answered, it might be said that they were not at God's disposal. If all petitions were granted, it might be thought that we should serve God only for the sake of worldly things." And in a number of elegant allusions he goes on to show the benefit of afflictions to the righteous, and the curae which accompanies them to the wicked.* He mentions also the propriety of punishing the godly often in this life, because they are not sufficiently weaned from the world, and because they do not rebuke the sins of the world as they ought, but conform too much to the taste of ungodly men. He answers the objections drawn from their sufferings in the late disaster. "Many Christians, say they, are led captive. It would be very miserable, he owns, if they could be led to any place, where they could not find their God." In the same book he excellently handles the subject of suicide, demonstrates its cow-

* *Pari motu exagitatum et exhalat horribiliter cœnum, et suaviter fragrat augustum, &c.* It is a just recommendation of this treatise, that its Latin is of a superior taste to that of his other works, which were written to the populace; this was meant for the perusal of philosophers.

* Jerom's works, vol. i. 91. P. Go.

ardice, and exposes the pusillanimity of Cato. He mentions the prayer of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who had reduced himself to poverty for the sake of Christ, when the Barbarians laid waste his city: "Lord, suffer me not to be tormented on account of gold and silver; for where all my wealth is thou knowest." For there he had his all, where the Lord hath directed us to lay up our treasure, and he strongly insists, as the fullest answer to objections, that the saint loses nothing by all his afflictions.

Having sufficiently spoken to the particular occasion, he proceeds, in the

Book 2d. second book, to wage OFFENSIVE WAR WITH THE PAGANS,

and shows that while their religion prevailed, it never promoted the real benefit of men. In this book he proves his point with respect to moral evils. Immoral practices were not discouraged or prohibited in the least by the popular idolatry, but, on the contrary, vice and flagitiousness were encouraged. He triumphs in the peculiar excellence of Christian institutes, because by them instruction was constantly diffused among the body of the people, of which the whole system of Pagan-worship was void. His observations on Stage-plays,* and on the vicious manners of the Romans, even in the best times of their republic, as confessed by Sallust, or at least deduced by fair inference from his writings, are extremely worthy of attention. I have not seen a more just estimate any where of Roman virtue, than is to be found in this and some of the following books. The classical reader will do well to attend to his remarks, after he has made himself master of the historical facts. And, it is only one instance among many of the unhappy propensity of the age to infidelity, that the specious sophisms of Montesquieu concerning the virtue of the Roman republic, are so much sought after and held in such veneration, while the solid arguments of Augustine are scarcely known among us. He eloquently describes what sort of felicity a carnal heart would desire, and, in the description, shows the unreasonableness of its wishes. In the same book will be found some valuable remains of Cicero de Republica, a most profound and ingenious treatise, of which a few fragments are preserved by Augustine, and which are introduced by him, to

show, that, by Cicero's confession, the Roman state was completely ruined before the times of Christianity. The book concludes with a pathetic exhortation to unbelievers.

In the third book he demonstrates that the Pagans had no more help from their religion against natural evils, than they had against moral. He re-

Book 3d.

counts the numberless miseries endured by the Romans long before the coming of Christ, such as would by malice have been imputed to the Christian religion had it then existed, some of which were more calamitous, than any thing which they had lately sustained from the Goths.

In the fourth book he demonstrates that the Roman felicity, such as it was, was not caused by their religion. Here he weighs the nature of that

Book 4th.

glory and extent of empire with which the carnal heart is so much captivated; and demonstrates, in the most solid manner, that a large extended empire is no more an evidence of felicity, than immense property is in private life; and whoever has been fascinated by political writers, ancient or modern, into an admiration of this false glory, may see it excellently combated by the reasonings of Augustine. The Pantheistic philosophy, of which the old sages are full, is ridiculed, and the futility of all the popular religions exposed. In the conclusion he gives a short view of the dispensations of Providence toward the Jews, and shows the superiority of their felicity, so long as they were obedient, to that of the Romans.

In the fifth book he describes the virtue of the old Romans, and what reward was given to it here on earth—shadowy reward for shadowy virtue. He

Book 5th.

gives an excellent account of the vice of vain-glory, and contrasts it with the humility of Christians. He demonstrates that it was the true God who dispensed his mercies and judgments toward the Romans. A more striking view of the captivacy of warlike grandeur cannot be found, than in the account which he gives of the condition of the victors and the vanquished, and in the demonstration that the latter were no way inferior to the former in point of real happiness, except in the crisis of battle.

In the same book he argues against Cicero, and shows the consistency of the prescience of God with the free agency

* By Roman laws, players could not be admitted into Roman citizenship.

of man. In this and some other parts of his works, the discerning reader may see some traces of that ingenious work, Jonathan Edwards's Enquiry on Free-will. He takes notice of the total defeat sustained by Rhodagases, the barbarous Pagan, in Italy, and reminds the Gentiles how insultingly they had declared, beforehand, that he would certainly be victorious. His observations on the ill success of the pious emperor Gratian, and the prosperity of Constantine and Theodosius, deserve also our attention.

Having shown, in the first five books, that Paganism could do nothing for men in temporal things, in the five following books he proves, that it was also totally insignificant with respect to the next life. * Here we meet with some valuable fragments of the very learned Varro, who divides religion into three kinds, the fabulous, the philosophical, and the political. Here too we have a clear and historical detail of the opinions of the ancient philosophers.†

Of the remaining books, the four first describe the beginning, the four middle the progress, and the four last the issues of the two states, namely, the city of God and the World; the history of both, and the different genius and spirit of each, are throughout conceived with great energy by the author, and are illustrated with copiousness and perspicuity.

The eleventh book begins with a just and solid view of the knowledge of God by the Mediator, and the authority of the Book 11th. Scriptures. A number of questions, which respect the beginnings of things, rather curious than important, follow. Among these there is, in the twelfth chapter, an occasional comparison of the felicity of the just in this life with that of Adam before his fall, which deserves a better character. His metaphysics concerning the origin of evil are interspersed. But the greater part of the book may be omitted with little loss to the reader. Yet his censure of Origen in the twenty-third chapter deserves attention. Origen censured.

In the twelfth book the question concerning the origin of evil is still more explicitly stated; and the opinions of Book 12th. those who pretend to account for the origin of the world in a

manner different from the Scriptures, and to give it an antiquity much superior to that which is assigned to it in them, are refuted.

The thirteenth book describes the fall of man; but questions of little or no moment are interspersed; and the subtlety of the learning of his Book 13th. mind, leads him here, as in various other parts of his writings, into trifling disquisitions. I do not, however, reckon of this sort his account of the difference between an animal and spiritual body, because it throws some good light on the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians.

The fourteenth book contains matter more interesting than the foregoing three, though it is not without unimportant speculations. A just idea of the magnitude of the first sin is given, and the justice of God is excellently vindicated. In the close of this book he contrasts the two states in a very graphical manner. "Two sets of affections have produced two states: self-love produced an earthly one to the contempt of God; the love of God produced a heavenly one to the contempt of man. That glories in man, this in the Lord. That seeks glory from men, to this, God, the witness of the conscience, is the greatest glory. That exalts the head in its own glory, this says to its God, THOU ART MY GLORY, AND THE LIFTER UP OF MY HEAD. In that the lust of power reigns, in this men serve one another in love, governors in providing, subjects in obeying. That loves its own strength, this says to its God, I will LOVE THEE, O LORD, MY STRENGTH. In that, wise men live according to man, and pursue the goods of body or mind, or both, or if they know God, honour him not as God, nor are thankful. In this, human wisdom is of no account, godliness is all, in which the true God is worshipped, and the reward is expected, in the society of saints and angels, that God may be all in all."

In the fifteenth book, he enters upon the second part of the history of the two states, namely, their progress. He describes very justly the two types, Sarah and Agar, and illustrates the spirit and genius of the two sects by the cases of Cain and Abel. He confutes those who would make the lives of the Antediluvians of shorter duration than that assigned them in Scripture. His Book 15th.

* Book vi.

† Book viii.

reflections on the Ark and the Deluge are just, though to us they contain little that is new; and in the last chapter he shows that the literal and allegorical sense of Scripture ought both to be supported, without depreciating either.

The sixteenth book carries on the history of the city of God from Noah to David, and contains important instruction **Book 16th.** throughout, especially to those who have not read the same things in modern authors.

The seventeenth book may be called the prophetic history. He shows a double sense must necessarily be affixed to **Book 17th.** the words of the prophets, in which sometimes the literal, sometimes the spiritual, and sometimes both senses are applicable. He justly observes, therefore, that the Scriptures are to be understood in a tripartite sense. And he gives an admirable instance of his views in Hannah's song in the first book of Samuel, in which a king is prophesied of, at a time when no king was in Israel. His comments on the Psalms are excellent also to the same purpose. These views are so remote from the usual mode of reasoning in our times, that they will not easily find credit in the world. But I will venture to affirm, that the more men study the Scriptures, the more they will see the justness of Augustine's remarks, and the necessity of admitting them.

In the eighteenth book he displays much learning in describing the times of **Book 18th.** the world coeval with those of the church of God, prior to the birth of Christ. He proves the superior antiquity of prophetic authority to that of any philosophers. The remarkable harmony of the sacred writers, in the promotion of one system, and the endless dissimilarities of philosophers, are ably contrasted. Yet he proves from the earliest times, that the citizens of the new Jerusalem were not confined absolutely to Jewry.

In speaking of the times of Christ and the propagation of the Gospel, he observes,* "In this indignant world, in these evil days, whilst the church is procuring false dignity by present hostility, and is disciplined by the incentives of fear, the torments of pain, the fatigue of labours, and the dangers of temptations, rejecting only in hope, when her joy is

sound, many reprobates are mixed with the good; both are collected into the Gospel-net, and both, included in this world as in a sea, swim promiscuously till they reach the shore, where the bad shall be severed from the good, and in the good, as in his temple, God shall be all in all."—Christ chose disciples meanly born, obscure and illiterate, that whatever great things they should do, he might be in them, and do all. One he had among them, whose evil he turned to good, by making it an instrument of his passion, and affording an example to his church of enduring evil. His holy church being planted, so far as his bodily presence required, he suffered, died, rose again, showing by his passion what we ought to sustain for truth, by his resurrection what to hope for in eternity; and this is an additional lesson to the great mystery of redemption, by which his blood was shed for the remission of our sins. He proves that the faith of the Gospel is strengthened by the dissensions of heretics; and after some observations on Antichrist, as just as might be expected in his time, he concludes with a remark on a Pagan prophecy, which affirmed that the Christian religion would only continue three hundred and sixty-five years. "What may be doing, says he, at the end of this period in other parts of the world, it may be needless to inquire. I will mention what I know; in the renowned city of Carthage, the imperial officers, in the year following the predicted extinction of Christianity, overturned the temples of the idols, and brake the images. And for the space of thirty years since that time, the falsity of the pagan divination being notorious, occasion hath been given to render the progress of the Gospel still more triumphant."

The four last books describe the issues of the two states. The nineteenth deserves the studious attention of every **Book 19th.** scholar who would accurately distinguish between theology and philosophy. He contrasts the ideas of happiness exhibited by both with great clearness, and, while he does justice to all the good that is found in secular systems, he points out their fundamental errors. The principles of evangelical virtue are stated; the miseries of life are described, and both the true relief against them which the Gospel proposes is exhibited, and the false consolations of philosophy are justly exposed. In fine (for

* Chap. xlix.

my limits admit not a longer detail) the reader will find here the mass of secular philosophy reduced to order, its errors detected, and the very picture of the Christian state and genius delineated.

The twentieth book undertakes to describe the last judgment. But as the vigorous and discursive genius of the Book 20th.

author led him to handle a multitude of intricate questions, and to undertake the exposition of some of the most difficult prophecies in the Scripture, for which the early times in which he lived were unequal, through want of the evidence of their accomplishment, almost the whole is very uninteresting.

In the two last books he gives his ideas of the punishment of the wicked, and of the happiness of the righteous in a future state. The former, though it

Former of the two last books. has a mixture of curious questions, more subtil than important, will from the eleventh

chapter to the end deserve a careful perusal. I have not seen, in so small a compass, a sounder answer to the objections of men against the Divine justice in punishing sin eternally, than is to be found in the eleventh and twelfth chapters. It appears that the Lord's Prayer was daily used by the church* in his time, and, though he seems to give an unsound interpretation to our Lord's words, of making FRIENDS OF THE MAMMON OF UN-RIGHTEOUSNESS, yet he confesses his interpretation would be dangerous in practice; and he protests against the ideas of those who imagine they can atone for their sins by alms. He refutes various presumptions of men who expect to escape the damnation of hell without a sound conversion.

In the last book, which describes the eternal rest of the city of God, he dwells a little on the external evidences of Christianity, and in speaking of

Last Book. miracles, he describes some which were wrought in his own time. One of them, the healing of a disorder, seems peculiarly striking, because it was in answer to prayer. I have again to regret the scholastic and subtil taste of his times interwoven with most important matter. The twenty-second chapter gives as striking a proof, drawn from facts, of human apostasy as I have seen. The reflections in the two next chapters are

also admirable. And he closes with a delightful view of the eternal felicity of the Church of God.

Should the very imperfect sketch I have given of this work, one of the greatest efforts of genius and learning in any age, induce any classical scholars to peruse it with candour and attention, and, by the blessing of God, to imbibe some portion of the heavenly spirit of the author, I shall have cause to rejoice. One caution I must however give in reading it, which, indeed, is generally necessary in reading the Fathers, and it is that which I would keep steadily in view throughout this history. We must forget our own times, spirit, taste, and manner: We must transplant ourselves into those of the author, and make allowances for his modes both of thinking and speaking, which are extremely different from our own. Without this reasonable degree of candour, to which, however, few minds are sufficiently inclined, it is impossible to make a just estimate of the works which pass under our examination.

CHAPTER VI.

AUGUSTINE'S CONDUCT TOWARD THE DONATISTS.

THE active spirit of the bishop of Hippo found sufficient employment in his long course of private and public labours against the Pelagians, the Manichees, and the Donatists, besides the general care of the African churches, and the peculiar inspection of his own diocese. The two former sects he in a manner eradicated: his own experience in religion fitted him for the work. The last sect he opposed with much success. Vital godliness, it is true, is not so much interested in this opposition, nor does his conduct here merit in all respects that praise in regard to them, which it does in regard to the others.

Let us distinguish the Donatists as they ought to be. Some of them were, comparatively speaking, a mild and peaceable people; others, called the *Circumcelliones*, were a mere banditti, sons of violence and bloodshed, who neither valued their own lives, nor those of their neighbours, and frequently were remarkable for committing suicide in a fit of frenzy. They had a peculiar malice against the pastors of the general church, and way-laid them, from time to time, attacked

* Chap. last.

them with armed force, and mutilated, or even killed them. They burnt the houses of those who would not comply with their sect, and were guilty of many detestable enormities. Augustine himself was several times way-laid by these miserable men, and once by a peculiar providence, through the mistake of his guide, was led into a different road from that by which he had intended to travel, when he was going through one of his usual visitations of his diocese, a work which he was wont to discharge with frequency and labour. He learnt afterwards, that by this means he had escaped an ambush which they had laid for him.

There was nothing peculiarly doctrinal in the whole scheme of the Donatists: they differed from the general church only concerning a matter of fact, namely, whether Cæcilian had been legally ordained. Augustine justly observes in his controversy with them, that, if their opponents had been mistaken, such a circumstance justified not at all their separation from the general church, since Jesus Christ, his grace and doctrine, remained the same. Yet for such a trifle, even from the close of the third century to this which is before us, did these schismatics think it worth while to rend the body of Christ, when the articles of belief were the same in both parties. So much had men forgotten to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace! The peaceable Donatists abhorred the madness of the Circumcelliones, and yet had not the discernment to see and lament the evils which their own needless schism had occasioned. They themselves were crumbled into parties, and subdivided into little bodies which condemned one another, each arrogating to itself the title of the true church, while they all joined to condemn the general church. In the mean time they were extremely active in baptizing multitudes in Africa; for the baptism of the general church was not by them allowed to be valid.

Augustine owns, concerning one party of them, the Rogatians, that they carefully distinguished themselves from the Circumcelliones. Whether the rest did so, is not so evident. This may be safely affirmed, that all truly humble and godly persons of the Donatist name (and I hope there were many such in Africa) must have separated themselves from them entirely. But it was very difficult for others to make the just distinction: Afri-

ca was full of these schismatics, and the ferocious party were undoubtedly very numerous. Let us briefly state the methods used by Augustine with respect to this people.

At first, when he saw the vast numbers of them with which Africa swarmed, his heart was struck with horror at the thought of exposing them to the penal laws of the empire; and he wrote to the Imperial court his sentiments and wishes, which were, that the lawless and savage conduct of the Circumcelliones might be restrained by the civil sword, but that no other arms should be used against the peaceable Donatists, than preaching and arguments; because, as he observed, compulsive conversions were not genuine, and tended only to harden men in sin.

Other bishops of the general church in Africa were not so moderate: they desired that the civil restraints should be exercised on the whole Donatist name, and signified these sentiments to the Imperial court, at a time when their spirits were heated by the savage treatment of a certain bishop, who had fallen into the hands of the Circumcelliones, and was believed to have lost his life. Under the impression of this belief, on account of many enormities which had been practised by the banditti, the court issued orders for fines to be imposed on the Donatists, and banishment on their bishops. It was not till after these edicts were promulged, that it appeared, that the injured bishop had escaped with life. Augustine owns that he afterwards retracted his opinion, when he saw the good effects of the interposition of the civil magistrate. Many of the Circumcelliones, he observes, with much humility and joy confessed their error, and returned into the bosom of the church: numbers too, who had never joined in their enormities, and who had nothing to plead for their schism but custom and tradition, and the shame of inconstancy, and the fear of molestation from the Circumcelliones, when they found themselves exposed to the laws for the defence of their schism, began to examine the grounds on which it stood, saw and confessed their error, and united themselves to the general church with every mark of serious repentance. Moved by these considerations, and convinced by the effects rather than the reason of the case, the bishop of Hippo repeatedly supported in his writings the justice and

reasonableness of the imperial methods of opposing the Donatists.

It is certain, however, that he continued all the time extremely tender in his conscience concerning this subject. He repeatedly and earnestly pressed the magistrates on no account to shed blood, and in all his writings and conduct on this occasion demonstrated, that he was led by principle, by the fear of God, and by a charitable compassion for the souls of men, in his contentions with the Donatists. I know it is not easy for men to believe this, who are themselves profane and careless, and with whom all sorts of religion are of equal value, because they are apt to measure others by themselves. Yet, whoever shall take pains to weigh the writings of Augustine, and to compare them with his practice and general temper, will feel an invincible conviction, that I have not been betrayed into an excess of candour in forming this judgment. In truth, the case was mixed and complicated; one sort of conduct ought to have been held toward the furious, another toward the peaceable. But it was difficult to distinguish in real fact, though none in our times will doubt, that Augustine's first sentiments were more just than his second. He largely insists on the unreasonableness of the Donatists in confining the mercies of salvation to themselves, as if all the world had been unchristian, and Africa alone were possessed of the truth. And he observed, that their absurdity appeared still stronger in confining salvation to some particular spots of Africa, when they had subdivided themselves into little parties, each pretending to monopolize the truth. But then the general church should not have imitated this bigotry, in condemning the whole body of the Donatists. Highly culpable as these were in breaking the unity of the church, the peaceable part of them, who feared God, and wrought righteousness, should have been owned as brethren by the general church, and the furious alone should have been rejected as unchristian, and exposed to the civil law for their crimes. It was an erroneous notion of the unity of the church, and the dread of schism on the one hand, which led Augustine into the mistake; and it was an abuse of the right of conscience on the other, which seduced the Donatists.*

The bishop of Calama, one of the disciples of Augustine, going to visit his diocese, was attacked by the Circumcelliones, robbed, and so ill-treated, that he escaped with difficulty. Upon this, Crispinus the Donatist bishop of Calama, was fined by the magistrate according to the laws. He denied himself to be a Donatist, and the two bishops of Calama appeared in court, and pleaded before a great multitude, nor did Augustine refuse his assistance to the church on this occasion. The Donatist was convicted, and required to pay the fine. But the disciple of Augustine, satisfied with his victory, begged that the fine might be remitted, which request was granted accordingly. The pride of the Donatist refused to stoop, and he appealed to the Emperor, who ordered the law to be executed with the greatest rigour on the whole party. The bishops of the general church, however, with Augustine at their head, implored for them the imperial clemency, and were successful in their petition.

No doubt it would have been far more agreeable to the maxims of Christianity, had no methods but those of argument been employed against the Donatists. But the difficulties of the case have been stated; and the conduct of Augustine, and no doubt of other godly persons in Africa, was in general of a piece with the

esting to take notice of the endless perversions with which Mr. Gibbon has filled the history of the church. A remark or two may be made, to guard those who read his History against his deceptions. In reading him (chap. xxxiii. Vol. III. Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire) I was surprised to meet with two representations, for neither of which I could find any foundation in original records, both relating to these Donatists. The first is, that he ascribes the madness, and tumult, and bloodshed of the Circumcelliones to the imperial persecutions in Augustine's time. I will not say how far these outrages might be increased by them; but the Donatists had ever been an unruly and turbulent sect. Their very origin was scandalous, and in Julian's time their furious conduct deserved the interference of the civil magistrate, Aug. ad Donat. Ep. 106. Fleury, Vol. II. B. xv. C. 32. His second account is still more glaringly false. He ascribes the success of the Vandals in Africa to the effect of the same prosecution of the Donatists, who, he supposes, joined the arms of Genseric against the general church. Of this no proof appears at all. He might as justly have ascribed the Pretender's invasion of Scotland, in the last rebellion, to the revival of godliness in Great Britain, which took place about the same time.

* It would be equally tedious and uninter-

mild behaviour which they displayed on this occasion. Instances, however, of impetuous and oppressive exertions from the pious and Donatists would naturally take place, amidst the indignation of men's souls against the Circumcellions. Nor is there any thing in all this which impeaches the acknowledged sincerity, modesty, and piety of the bishop of Hippo, notwithstanding the mistake of judgment, which happened to him in common with the whole church at that time. It is a delicate and difficult matter to settle, in all cases, how far the civil magistrate ought to interfere in religion. Different ages are apt to run into different extremes, as either superstition or profaneness predominates. Doubtless there is a middle path of moderation in this subject, which I have endeavoured to describe on a former occasion, though, to apply it with exactness to all cases and circumstances would be difficult in itself, and foreign to the design of this history. Donatism, however, under the charitable and argumentative labours of Augustine, received a blow, from which it never recovered, and the sect dissolved gradually into insignificance; and the most pleasing part of the story is, that by the suppression of the Circumcellions, the ecclesiastical face of Africa must have been abundantly refreshed, and in all probability, a great accession made to the real church of Christ.*

CHAPTER VII.

THE REST OF AUGUSTINE'S WORKS REVIEWED.

THE two tracts on Lying, addressed to Cæcilius, demonstrate the soundness of the author's views in morality. Such

* After examining Augustine's writing concerning the Donatists, particularly the letters 48, 49, 51, and 127, and the narrative of Pseudo-Agostinus, I have endeavoured to compress into this chapter the substance of the historical information which they contain, without troubling myself or the reader with particular criticism. I have done so this occasion, what I profess to do generally, to the best of my ability, namely, formed my judgment on original evidence, and not on the opinions and reasonings of any modern whatever. Laborious task! compared with the ease of copying other historians; needless also, because it often obliges one to correct modern representations! But it is the task of a real historian.

indeed is the connexion between one part of divine truth and another, that those who have the justest and the largest views of Gospel-grace, have always the most exact and extensive ideas of moral duty, and what is more, exemplify them in life and conversation. For the same self-righteousness, which tarnishes the lustre of divine grace, always induces its votary to curtail the demands of the divine law, to adulterate it with pride and the love of the world, and to render a thousand things allowable in practice, which an humble and holy soul must abhor. We have seen what vague and dangerous notions of veracity had begun to prevail during the progress of superstition, from which even such men as Ambrose and Chrysostom were not exempt; and that what are called pious frauds had in some instances been esteemed laudable. Augustine in the treatise before us, defines lying to be "The saying of one thing and thinking of another;" and in all cases, even for the most pious and salutary purposes, he excludes lying as unchristian. The second chapter of the epistle to the Galatians had been perversely interpreted in that part of it which relates to the dissimulation of Peter.* He rescues the divine oracles from the abuse, and demonstrates from the most express and determinate decisions of the New Testament, that all deceit of the tongue is wicked. The task was worthy of him who was the principal instrument of the revival of godliness in the church.†

* Aug. Opera, tom. iv. page 2. Paris edition, 1571.

† In this Chapter, the other works of Augustine, which have not fallen under our consideration in the preceding Chapters, are considered, so far as I think them worthy of the reader's particular attention. Those parts of his voluminous writings, which are either mere repetitions of what has been elsewhere illustrated, or seem not to convey any interesting instruction, or handle subjects which have been much better treated by those who have had the advantage of later improvements, are omitted.—The book of Meditations, though more known to English readers than any other of the works ascribed to Augustine, on account of the translation of it into our language by Stoughton, seems not to be his, both on account of its style, which is westerly, concise, abrupt, and void of any of those classical elegance, which now and then appear in our author's genuine writings, and also on account of the prayers to deceased Saints which it contains. This last circumstance peculiarly marks it to have been of a later date than the

His treatise on faith and works was written to obviate the Antinomianism, which some were in his time desirous of introducing. Men, who still persevered in their sins, desired to be baptized; and there were those who supported their unreasonable wishes, and thought it sufficient to teach them, after baptism, how they ought to live, still holding out a hope to their minds, that they might be saved as by fire, because they had been baptized, though they never repented of their sins. In answer to these dangerous abuses, our author shows, that the true saving faith works by love, that the instruction of catechumens includes morals, as well as doctrines; that the labour of catechising is exceedingly profitable to the church, and that persons ought to be catechized before they receive baptism, that they may know how vain it is to think of being eternally saved without holiness. He justly observes, that the eunuch's answer to Philip, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," virtually and radically involved in it, a knowledge of the true character of the person and offices of Christ, and of the qualities which belong to his members. He supports his doctrine by Scripture authority, particularly by that of St. James in his second chapter; and against those who say, that they would believe in Christ and come to him, and are hindered, he observes, "We do not prohibit such as are willing, from coming to Christ, but we prove by their own practice that they are not willing to come to Christ; nor do we forbid them to believe in Christ, but demonstrate that they are not willing to believe in Christ, who suppose that adulterers can be his members." On the whole, he reprobates the most dangerous notion of the possibility of baptized persons being saved in their sins, and recommends strongly an attention to church-discipline, and to the wholesome practice of catechizing, showing through the whole a zeal for the cause of holiness, and a fear of men's abusing the doctrines of grace.*

age of Augustine. Frauds of this kind were commonly practised on the works of the Fathers in the monastic times. For the most part, however, this book may be read with profit by the serious reader, because of the devotional spirit in which it resembles the genuine works of Augustine.

* Id. p. 18.

In a small treatise to Simplician the aged bishop of Milan, who was both the instructor and the successor of Ambrose, he undertakes to solve the difficulties usually grounded on the ninth chapter to the Romans. And he defends the doctrine of divine grace in his usual manner. His remarks on "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy," will deserve to be transcribed. "It is not said, it is not of him that is unwilling and despises, but of God who hardens.—Nothing is done by God to make men worse; only that is not bestowed by him upon some men, which might make them better. Since human society is connected by giving and receiving, who does not see, that no man is accused of iniquity, who exacts what is due to himself, or remits the same? This idea of equity is impressed on us by the Divinity. All men die in Adam, being one mass of iniquity: this death may be called a debt due to Divine Justice, which, whether it be exacted, as with some, or remitted, as with others, there is no iniquity."*

The treatise on catechising the ignorant deserves to be read, both for the solid and pious vein of instruction which runs through it, and also for the light which it throws on the customs of the Church. It appears, that whoever desired to be admitted into the church, was obliged to attend the catechist; and the work, in our author's manner of practising it, was very important. The person to whom he writes, had expressed a concern, because he could not please himself in his manner of speaking. Augustine observes, that this may easily happen, even when there is no particular fault in our manner of exhorting. He owns that it was generally the case with himself. And that the reason is, the mind of a serious preacher or catechist conceiving in one glance a beauty and weight in his subject, to express which his words are too slow or inadequate, he feels ashamed and disappointed; yet, continues Augustine, he ought not to conclude, that his words are lost, or that they appear as mean to the hearers, as they do to himself. "We see," says he, "but in a glass darkly, and we must patiently labour to make greater improvement in divine life. Yet

* Id. p. 147.

it is desirable to catechise with a cheerful spirit, and with sensible comfort in one's own mind. This, however, is the gift of God."

In the method of catechising, he recommends to begin with narration, to give to the pupils a clear and succinct view of the great facts, relative to our religion, both in the Old and New Testament, and to dwell more largely on the more important, and only glance at those which are less so. In the whole manner of doing this, the teacher should have his eyes steadily fixed on the great end, love, and refer everything, which he relates, to the plan, of divine love in the gift of Jesus Christ, describing the fall and the redemption, and the method of God in winning back the apostate spirits of men to love him, in return for his free love to us in Jesus Christ. Yet he observes, that without fear of Divine wrath, there can be no motive for sinners to approach to the God of love, or any sufficient inducements to engage their minds to seek him. Nor should the catechist be too shy in conveying his instructions, because the catechumen's motives may be merely worldly. It often happens, says he, through the mercy of God, that he, who applied to us for instruction with carnal views, is brought to feel the value of that, of which at first he only made pretence. But it would be useful, if the catechist could know beforehand what was the frame of the catechumen. If he cannot, he must interrogate him himself, and regulate his discourse by the answers he receives. If the catechumen owns, that fear of Divine wrath for sin, or the terror of some powerful awakening administration from God, has led him to apply for instruction, the catechist has then the fairest opening for instruction.

When he has finished his narration, he should add exhortation, laying open the hope of resurrection, and the awful views of divine judgment, of heaven and hell. He should arm the catechumen against the scandals and temptations to which he may be exposed from the perverseness of heretics, the malice of open enemies, or the evil lives of nominal Christians. And he is particularly to be directed, amidst all the precepts given him, how to please God and live a holy life, not to trust in any of his works, but in the grace of God alone.

If the person hath had a liberal education, he must not be offended by a tedious

and diffusive view of things respecting the facts of Christianity, though a fuller display of the same facts will be needful for the unlearned.—The discourse must be varied; it will be necessary in some things to be more large, as in others to be more brief. For instance, in guarding him against the pride of learning, and in forming his taste, he will need to be seriously instructed to avoid faults of a moral rather than those of a literary nature, and to dread the want of grace in his words and deeds, rather than a solecism or barbarism in language, and to take particular care not to despise illiterate Christians.

He hath already hinted at one discouragement with which the catechist is apt to be affected. Another is, that whereas he would rather himself read or hear things useful for his own improvement, he is obliged repeatedly to have recourse to things, which to himself are now no longer necessary. No doubt this is one cause in all ages, why so few love the office of instructing the ignorant. Those who themselves are ignorant, are not fit to instruct, and those who are knowing, are apt to be above the task. A pastor, he observes, is engaged in some agreeable study, and is told that he must proceed to catechise. He is vexed that the course of his work is interrupted, and from the agitation of his mind, is less fitted to discharge the work itself.

Hence, he concludes, it is necessary that the teacher should himself learn those things, which may exhilarate his own mind: for God loveth a cheerful giver. He adds, that the meek and charitable example of the Son of God should to this end be placed before him, to shame him out of his pride and impatience; that if indeed we have any more useful study to prosecute, respecting ourselves, we may then expect that God will speak to us in it more powerfully, when we have undertaken cheerfully to speak for him as well as we could to others; and that the tediousness of that trite and plain road of catechising should be smoothed by divine love in the heart; and that when we consider that we are poor judges of the best order of things, and how much better it is to leave the direction of times and seasons with the all-wise God, we shall not take it amiss, that the providential calls of duty disturbed the order which we had prescribed to ourselves, and that, in short, his will took place before ours.

In interrogating the catechumen, he is to be asked, whether he means to be a Christian for the sake of this life or the next. And one of the most important cautions to be given him is, that he desire to be a Christian solely on account of eternity.

He concludes with the form of a catechetical instruction, which is itself no mean sermon, comprehending the very essentials of the Gospel salvation by Jesus Christ through faith,* the most important doctrines connected with the most material Christian duties.—But enough of this subject: let those pastors, with whom religion is mere form, read and blush, and learn and imitate.

In his treatise on patience,† he is solicitous to show that its origin is from divine grace, and that it is a virtue, in its whole nature, distinct from any thing seemingly resembling it, which may arise from natural resources. To pave

the way to an illustration of this thought, he starts an objection, natural enough to an infidel mind: "If men, to gratify their secular desires, can without divine grace, by the mere strength of nature, endure patiently the greatest hardships, why may not men by the same strength endure afflictions through the love of eternal life?"

In answer to this, he observes, that the stronger men's desires are after worldly things, the more firmly and resolutely will they endure hardships to obtain the gratification of their selfish desires, whether riches, praise, or whatever else. In like manner, the more sincerely they love heavenly things, the more cheerfully will they endure what they are called to suffer on their account. Now worldly desire originates from the human will, is strengthened by the delight which the mind takes in worldly objects, and is confirmed by custom. But the love of God has no such origin; it is not from ourselves, it is altogether by the Holy Ghost given to us. And he goes on to show, that electing grace, not in consequence of any works of man, but previous to them all, while he is ungodly and without strength, chooses him to salvation, and bestows on him the whole power to will and to do, and is itself the first and decisive source of all the good which he does, which good is all along assisted, supported, and maintained to

the end, and at length rewarded hereafter.

It is not in commenting on the Scriptures, that the peculiar excellencies of Augustine appear. The fanciful mode of Origen vitiated the whole plan of exposition, from his days to the Reformation. Yet, Augustine has far less of it, and enters more precisely into the sacred oracles than most of the fathers of his time; but he does this better in expounding a particular point of doctrine, which he has before him, than in any of his orderly comments. His exposition of the Psalms is full of pious sentiments, and he breaks out from time to time into beautiful and pathetic observations. He sees Christ every where in the Psalms, though he is not always happy in his manner of expounding the passages. On his exposition of St. John's Gospel, similar observations may be made. It cannot, however, be denied, that extremely imperfect as his expositions are, they have been highly useful to the church, because the lights which they contained were not only beneficial to pious men in the dark ages, but afforded also much assistance to the reformers, when a more judicious and intelligent vein of interpretation took place.

His treatise on Christian doctrine* deserves to be perused throughout by young ministers; for the purpose of forming the taste and directing the manner, as well as enlightening the understanding, and warming the heart of him who undertakes to instruct mankind.

Treatise
on Christian
Doctrine.

As a preacher, Augustine doubtless excelled; but his excellence lay in exhibiting that which was useful to the vulgar, not that which was entertaining to the learned. Perhaps, in no age was the pastoral taste more depraved, than it is in the present. A highly finished, elaborate and elegant style, is looked on as the perfection of a Christian speaker, and the manner, rather than the matter, is the chief object. It is not considered, that an artificial and polished arrangement of sentences is lost on a vulgar audience; and those who affect it, are, it is to be feared, little moved themselves with the importance of divine things, and are far more solicitous for their own character as speakers, than for the spiritual profit of their hearers. Yet in no age did God Almighty ever more clearly show, by the

* Id. p. 217.

† Id. p. 243.

* Tom. iii. beginning.

effects, what was agreeable in his sight. What a number of learned and elaborate sermons have been preached to no purpose! even the truth of the doctrine that is in them is rendered, in a great measure, useless by the wisdom of words, with which it has been clothed: While plain artless colloquial addresses to the populace, by men fearing God, and speaking of divine things in fervour and charity, have been attended with DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT AND OF POWER, and souls have been rescued, through their means, from sin and Satan. Classical and ornamental knowledge is not the first thing to be aimed at by a pastor. If he is yet very young, his time indeed is laudably employed in cultivating his faculties in this respect. And if his genius for eloquence be strong and acute, he will soon learn the justest rules sufficiently for the purpose of his profession. There is indeed an eloquence in the Scriptures, but it is an eloquence adapted to the subject, plainly divine. A pastor who has talents for speaking, attended with superior learning and endowments, will study to attain "a diligent negligence," that he may never overshoot the capacities of his audience, either by refined reasonings or by artificial elegancies of diction. Plain, downright, above all things perspicuous and intelligible, without being rude or clownish, he will descend to the lowest comprehension of his audience; and his grandeur and sublimity will appear in things, not in words. He will gladly give up his reputation to the fastidiousness of critics; for he has souls to bring into Christ's fold, and is not solicitous of the praise of men. He will shew, without designing it, from time to time, that he CAN speak more elaborately, and more elegantly; but eloquence will follow his subject, not go before it. This will be the plan of a man of genius and learning in the work of the pulpit: he will humble himself, that Christ may be exalted. But Christ can do his work by workmen of slower and more ordinary capacities, and he often has done so.*

* Augustine knew how to practice his own rules of eloquence, and two instances related by himself show him notwithstanding the defective taste of his age, to have been no mean orator. While he acted as a presbyter at Hippo, under Valentin his bishop, he was appointed by him to preach to the people in order to reclaim them from customs fostering on solemn days. He opened the Scriptures, and read to them the most veho-

I have not wandered from the subject of CHRISTIAN doctrine, handled by Augustine. What I have mentioned are in a great measure his ideas.* One important rule he adds, which, though plain to every serious mind, is too much overlooked by many. "Let our Christian orator," says he, "who would be understood and be heard with pleasure, pray before he speak. Let him lift up his thirsty soul to God, before he pronounce any thing. For, since there are many things which may be said, and many modes of saying the same thing, who knows, except he who knows the hearts of all men, what is most expedient to be said at the present hour? And who can cause us to speak what we ought, and as we ought, unless he in whose hands we and our words are? And, by these means, he may learn all that is to be taught, and may acquire a faculty of speaking as becomes a pastor. At the hour itself of speaking, a faithful spirit will think his Lord's words adapted to his circum-

ment rebukes. He brought them by the ignominy and sorrow which they brought upon themselves, and by the blood of Christ, not to destroy themselves, to pity him who spake to them with so much affection, and to show some regard to their venerable old bishop, who, out of tenderness to them, had charged him to instruct them in the truth. "I did not make them weep,"† says he, "by first weeping over them, but while I was preaching, their tears prevented mine. Then I own I could not restrain myself. After we had wept together, I began to entertain great hope of their amendment." He now varied from the discourse he had prepared, because the present softness of their minds seemed to require something different. In time, he had the satisfaction to find the evil redressed from that very day.

The other occasion was this: "We must not imagine," says he, "that a man has spoken powerfully, when he receives much applause. This is sometimes given to low turns of wit, and merely ornamental eloquence. But the sublime overwhelms the mind with its vehemence, it strikes them dumb; it melts them into tears. When I endeavoured to persuade the people of Carthage to abolish their barbarous sports, in which, at a certain time of the year, they fought publicly for several days, I said what I could; but while I heard only their acclamations, I thought I had done nothing; when they wept, I entertained a hope that the horrible custom which they had received from their ancestors would be abolished.—It is now upwards of eight years since that time, and by the grace of God they have ever since been restrained from the practice." Here was true eloquence, and, what is of far more consequence, true piety in a preacher.

* B. iv.

† Ep. 29. to Alypius.

stances: 'Think not what or how ye shall speak, for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.' If the Holy Spirit speak in those who are delivered up to persecutors for Christ, why not also in those who deliver Christ to learners? But, on the other side, if any say, that men need to know no rules nor follow any studies, if the Holy Ghost make men teachers, it might be said also, men need not to pray, because our Lord saith, 'Your Father knoweth what ye have need of before ye ask him;' and at this rate the rules of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus might be superseded. Prayer and study therefore should go hand in hand; and the two epistles to Timothy and that to Titus are of standing authority in the church, and ought to be deeply meditated upon by every one who undertakes the office of a teacher."

The whole treatise deserves to be studied by junior pastors; the fourth book particularly; in the latter part of which Excellence he lays down the three sorts of Book IV. of style so judiciously described by Cicero, exemplifies them by Scripture instances, and instructs his young Christian orator how to adapt them to the nature of the subjects which lie before him.

His treatise on the Trinity* is very elaborate. Perhaps all that has ever been said in any age, in vindication and explanation of that great mystery, is contained in this book. It is in perfect unison with the expositions and sentiments of all the pious men who preceded him, and particularly with the views of Novatian in his treatise on the same subject. Whether the writers were of the general church, or dissenters, they are perfectly unanimous in confessing the Trinity in unity, and in proving the doctrine from Scriptures, and in leaving something after all inexplicable in the subject; but in a manner congruous to the incomprehensibility of the Divine essence. Augustine does full justice indeed to the argument, but it must be confessed, he goes too far; he loses both himself and his readers, by metaphysical subtilties and vain attempts to find analogies and similitudes, yet with a spirit so humble and cautious, as to separate carefully his con-

jectures from divine truth, and to leave the authority of Scripture unviolated. He, who has leisure, may peruse the whole work with profit. The humble and serious spirit of the author appears particularly in the several prefaces to its parts, and in the prayer at the close, an extract of which is as follows: "O Lord our God, we believe in thee the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. For the Truth would not have said, Go, baptize all nations, in the name, &c. if thou wert not a Trinity. Nor wouldest thou command us to be baptized in the name of him who is not God. I have sought thee, and examined and laboured much in composing this treatise. My God, my only hope, hear me, lest, through weariness, I cease to seek thee. Thou, who wilt be found, and hast given me increasing hope of finding thee, give me strength to seek thee. Before thee are my strength and my weakness. Preserve that and heal this. Before thee are my knowledge and ignorance. Where thou hast opened to me, uphold me, when I enter; where thou hast shut up, open to me when I knock. I would remember thee, understand thee, love thee. Augment in me these things, till thou perfectly form me anew. I know it is written, in the multitude of words, there wanteth not sin: but I would to God I spake only concerning thy word, and in praising thee; I should then do what is acceptable in thy sight, though I spake much. For thy Apostle would not have directed his son in the faith to preach the word, and to be instant in season,* out of season, were not this the case. Free me, O God, from the much inward speaking, which, while I fly to thy mercy, I feel in my miserable soul. For my thoughts are not silent when my tongue is. Many, alas! are my thoughts, which thou knowest to be vain. Grant me not to consent to them; and, if my nature delights in them, grant me to disapprove and not to dwell on them, even in a slumbering manner. Nor let them be so strong, as to proceed to any thing active; let my will, my conscience, be safe from them under thy defence. When we come to thee, many of those things we now say, shall cease, and thou shalt remain alone all in all, and we shall without end say one thing, praising thee in one, being made one in thee. What is

* Tom. iii.

* 2 Tim. iv.

thine in these books, may thine acknowledge; if there be any thing of mine, may thou and thine forgive!"

On Augustine's Sermons, I shall make only one remark. The reader would not think them to be the works of the learned and eloquent author of the *City of God*. But we must remember, that in them he was addressing, not scholars, but, the populace. They are plain and simple, but weighty and serious. He follows his own pastoral rules, and is himself the preacher he describes.

Amidst the many arduous and laborious employments of Augustine, in support of the doctrines of Christianity, and in the pastoral care, he yet found time to manage a large epistolary correspondence, a great part of which is preserved, and some specimens of it shall close this chapter.

The correspondence between him and the famous Jerom, the monk of Palestine, begins with the 8th, and ends with the 19th epistle. The principal subject of it was the reprehension of St. Peter by St. Paul mentioned in the 2d chapter to the Galatians. Jerom, following the stream of

the Greek expositors, who had gone before him, and who imitated the vicious mode of Origen, had asserted, that Paul could not seriously blame Peter for that which he had practised himself, in the circumcison of Timothy, and that, therefore, his rebuke of Peter was an officious lie, in which the two Apostles understood one another in private, and that the design was to deceive the people with a charitable view. Jerom,* it seems, carried his admiration of both

the Apostles to a superstitious excess, and could not bear to think of Peter being really found fault with for dissimulation. To maintain the honour of Peter, he is driven to undertake the vindication of deceit, when employed for a charitable purpose, and, what is worse, to fix the stain of a lie on a part of the revealed word of God, and to represent Paul, when writing by inspiration, as guilty of falsehood. Such mean and dangerous views attend superstition and self-righteous formality! I have not seen a practical case, which more

evidently showed the low declining state of godliness in these times.

Augustine, jealous of the honour of the divine word, and sensible of the danger of admitting falsehood, either into the books of inspiration, or into common life, with the same zeal that moved him to write against lying of all sorts, undertakes to clear up the subject, and with great accuracy explains the whole transaction, in the manner which we saw stated in the beginning of this volume.* Two essential points of Christianity are connected with his exposition, namely, the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Christ Jesus, and the duty of abstaining from deceit of the tongue of all kinds. All along, however, he treats the aged presbyter with a modesty becoming a junior.

Jerom is chafed to find himself contradicted, defends his interpretation by the authority of Origen, its inventor, and seems to rebuke the daring spirit of Augustine, for venturing out of the common road, and advises him, if he burned with a strong desire of glory, rather to seek out some champion of his own age, with whom he might contend, than to molest him who was a worn-out veteran. The angry monk seems to have measured the temper of the bishop of Hippo by his own. Learned as he undoubtedly was, he was still more distinguished for vain glory than for learning, and seems to have known too little of that sincere love of truth, which is connected with humility, the love of God, and the desire of leading souls to heaven, and is unmingled with all selfish considerations; a love of which, doubtless, reigned in the breast of Augustine.

Augustine finding that he had, though without design, given offence, answered to this effect: "In your letters I find many proofs of your kindness, and some marks of your disgust.—Far be it from me to be offended; I shall rather have reason to be thankful, if I be instructed and corrected by your correspondence. But, dearest brother, you would not think that I could be hurt by your answers, if you did not feel yourself hurt by my writings. As I cannot believe that you would think of hurting me un-

Opposed by Augustine.

Jerom is displeased.

Christian mildness and moderation of Augustine.

* Tom. ii. from p. 9 to 19.

* See p. 39, *supra*.

justly, it remains that I own my fault, in having offended you by those letters, which I cannot deny to be mine. Why do I strive against the stream, and not rather ask pardon? I beseech you, therefore, by the gentleness of Christ, that if I have offended you, you would forgive, lest you be induced by hurting me in return to render evil for evil." He goes on in a strain of mildness very uncommon among controversialists, and I observe nothing in the whole course of the debate, (which is far too long to quote,) that ought justly to give offence to Jerom. So unreasonably has our author been censured for heat and temerity, by writers who seem not to have been much acquainted with his works.* But these are faults vastly remote from Augustine, nor do I know any human author, ancient or modern, who dealt in controversy, so remarkably free from censoriousness and malignity. "I was much affected, says he, with the conclusion of your letter, in which you say, I wish I could embrace you, and by mutual conference teach or learn something. I say, for my part, I wish at least we lived nearer one another, that we might confer together more easily by letter. For I see there neither is nor can be so much knowledge of the Scriptures in me as in you. If I have any ability this way, I employ it in the service of God. Nor have I leisure, because of ecclesiastical occupations, to attend to more scriptural studies than those which relate to the pastoral care."

In the same letter he deeply laments the fierce quarrel which had arisen between Jerom and Rufinus, and which, at that time, made a great noise in the Christian world. "I confess

Quarrel between Jerom and Rufinus. I was much affected, that so grievous a discord should arise between two such intimate friends, united in a bond of union, well known to al-

most all the churches. I saw in your letters what pains you took to moderate your anger. Wo to the world because of offences! Truly that scripture is fulfilled. Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxed cold. But why do I lament this of others, since I know not what I myself shall do? I may with

difficulty, perhaps, know myself at present, but what I shall be hereafter I know not.—While I am refreshed with your kind words, I am again stimulated with the keenest grief, to see two men, to whom God had given to suck the honey of his word together in the sweetest friendship, fall into such a state of virulent hostility. Wo is me. I would fall at your feet, I would weep as long as I could, I would entreat as much as my affections would permit, now each one for himself, now both for each other, and for others, and particularly the weak for whom Christ died, who now behold your animosities with great danger of hurt to themselves.—But I tell you that my concern was really deep and strong, when I found you were really offended with me, and it has led me to be more prolix, perhaps, than I ought."

This is a specimen not only of the moderate temper, but also of the ardent charity, which every where appears in the writings of this author. Jerom himself was moved, and begs that the debate might be closed on both sides. And he appears ever after to have both esteemed and loved Augustine."

The people of Madaura sent a person, named Florentius, to Augustine, with a letter, desiring his assistance in some secular affair. The inhabitants of this place were as yet devoted to idolatry, and, through an insincerity very common with profane and careless minds, they addressed their epistle, "To Father Augustine, in the Lord, eternal salvation;"

and closed it with these words, "We wish you, Sir, in God and his Christ, for many years to rejoice in your clergy." It behoved not him, who had written a book in defence of strict unequivocal truth in all things, to pass these compliments unnoticed. He tells the Madaurians* that he had, as far as God permitted, attended to the business of Florentius, and then proceeds to expose the inconsistency of such professions with their idolatrous practices. On the first sight of them he owns he was suddenly struck with a belief of their conversion, or at least with a hope, that they desired to be converted by his ministry. "I asked the bearer of your letter, says he, whether ye were Christians, or desired

Message to Augustine from the people of Madaura.

* How delusive, and yet how common a thing is it, to form our idea of characters from the report of others, rather than from our own knowledge and careful investigation!

so to be. By whose answer I was grieved, that the name of Christ was, to you, become an object of derision. For I could not think that there was any other Lord, except the Lord Christ, through whom a bishop could properly be called father. If ye wrote this with sincerity, what hinders you from seeking salvation in the same Lord, by whom ye salute us? If ye wrote thus with a jocose deceitfulness, do ye impose on me the care of your business, in such a manner that instead of extolling with due veneration, ye insult by your flattery, that NAME, through which I have power to do any thing for you? Dearest brethren, know that I speak this with inexpressible concern for you, believing that a rejection of my warning will aggravate your condemnation." He goes on to lay open briefly, but strongly, the evidences of Christianity: and then tells them, that "there is an invisible God, the creator of all things, whose greatness is unsearchable; that there is a person,* by whom the invisible Majesty is exhibited, the Word, equal to him who begat him; and that there is a SANCTITY, the sanctifier of all things which are done in holiness, the inseparable and undivided communion of the invisible Deity and the Word. Who can look, with a serene and sincere mind, at this Being of beings, which I have laboured to express, though unable to exhibit with accuracy, and in beholding, forget himself, and obtain eternal salvation, unless, confessing his sins, he pull down all the mountains of his pride, and lower himself to receive God his teacher? Therefore the Word humbled himself, that we might more fear to be elated with the pride of man, than to be humbled after the example of God. Christ crucified is our object. Nothing is more potent than divine humility.—I beseech you, if ye named Christ not in vain, in your epistle, that I may not have written this in vain. But if ye did it in unthinking gaiety of heart, fear him whom the subject world now expects its Judge. The affection of my heart, expressed in this page, will be a witness at the day of judgment, to comfort you, if ye believe, to confound you, if ye remain in infidelity."

* I use the word Person, because I can scarcely otherwise express the author's meaning, but it is proper to tell the reader that there is nothing for it in the original.

The Madaurians, I suppose, expected not such a letter. It deserved to be in part laid before the reader, as a proper example of the open, manly, affectionate method in which Christians should reply to unmeaning compliments, or polite dissimulation. Maximus, a grammarian, answered by a letter,* partly complimentary, partly satirical, the most specious sentiment of which is, that Pagans and Christians, all believing one God, mean much the same thing. Augustine, in reply, gives him to understand, that the subject requires not levity, but seriousness, and that, by the help of the one living and true God, he will discuss these things more at large, when he shall perceive him to be in good earnest, giving him to understand, that the Christians in Madaura worshipped none but the living and true God.

A letter to Macedonius, concerning the road to true felicity,† deserves the serious perusal of every proud philosopher. Men who seek happiness from themselves, though Christians in form, are in effect, on the same plan as the ancient Stoics, whose proud pretences are justly ridiculed in this letter. Our author owns, that extreme torments would make life miserable, if the subject of them were destitute of hope, even though he were possessed of some virtues. He describes the way of felicity to lie through a course of humility, of faith, of the love of God and our neighbours, and of the hope of a future life of bliss.

In reply to Dioscorus,‡ he justly guards him against the curious and presumptuous spirit of philosophizing, and dares to pronounce, in opposition to Clements Alexandrinus, Origen, and several others of the fathers, that Christian piety needs not the assistance of secular instruction, but ought to depend solely on the Scriptures, and he cautions his friend against the pride of secular learning, representing humility to be the first, the second, the third, the all in true religion, as Demosthenes said of delivery in oratory. Here is another point, in which we see the revival of apostolical truth in the West, by the grace of God, under the hand of Augustine.

In his letter to Proba, on prayer,§ he

* Ep. 44.

† Ep. 56.

‡ Ep. 52.

§ Ep. 121.

gives a sound and judicious exposition of the Lord's prayer; and observes, that it

Letter on
prayer to
Proba. is so full and comprehensive, that though a man may pray in other words, and those of great variety, yet every lawful

subject of prayer may be reduced to one or other of the petitions which it contains.

Proba was a rich widow, and had a numerous family; and when we consider the large extension and fashionableness of the monastic spirit at that time, it seems an instance of candour in Augustine, that he does not hint to her a word of advice to follow the custom of the religious in that age, but contents himself with directing her to serve God in her present station. He advises her to be a DESOLATE WIDOW* in her frame and spirit, looking for heavenly things, not earthly, and shows within how small a compass our prayers for temporal things ought to be confined.

As a remedy against much speaking in prayer, he advises to utter short and quick ejaculations, rather than long-continued petitions, if the mind be not in a fervent state; but if the spirit be intent and vigorous, the petitions, he thinks, may be prolonged without any danger of offending against our Lord's precept in the Sermon on the Mount. And he speaks in an instructive manner on the office of the Holy Spirit, as interceding for the saints with unutterable groanings. The great object in prayer, he observes, should constantly be, the enjoyment of God; and he adds, that however inadequate the believer's conceptions be, yet he has a distinct idea of his object; so distinct, that you can never impose on a real saint by offering him something else in the room of it. He knows what he wants, and he knows that this or that is not the thing which he wants. The whole epistle, if we except a few fanciful expositions, after the manner of Origen, is excellent, and breathes a superior spirit of godliness.

One Cornelius wishing to receive from him a consolatory letter, on account of the loss of his wife,† Augustine, who

Consolatory letter to
Cornelius. knew that, notwithstanding this request, he lived in the excess of uncleanness, tells him, in allusion to the words of Cicero against Catiline, "I could wish to be gentle, I could wish, in so great dangers, not to be negligent, but can a bishop patiently hear a man, who lives in

sin, with greediness asking for a panegyric on his godly spouse, to mitigate his sadness on account of her decease?" He goes on to exhort him to repentance, with as much severity as might be expected from a faithful pastor of the mildest temper.

In the close of a letter to Florentina,* he reminds her, "that though she had learned something salutary from him, yet she ought firmly to remember, that she must be taught by the inner

Letter to
Florentina Master of the inner man, who shows in the heart the truth of what is said, because neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth."

While such views of divine teaching prevailed in the church, even all the ashes of superstition could not extinguish the fire of true godliness. It is the infelicity of our times, that not only the profane, but many serious persons are not a little irreverent in their ideas of spiritual illumination; and when I think of the miserable effects of this temper on the human mind, I am at a loss to determine whether I most dislike the childish superstitiousness of Augustine's age, or the proud pretensions to rationality of the present. To so much greater a degree has profaneness advanced under the latter than under the former.

The letter to Edicia† deserves to be attended to as characteristic of the taste of the times. This woman had, unknown to her husband, made a vow

Letter to
Edicia. of perpetual continency. In so great reputation, however,

were such practices at that time, that her husband consented afterwards to her resolution, and they still lived together, though he would not suffer her to assume the habit of a nun. Some time after, two travelling monks imposed on her simplicity to such a degree, that she gave nearly all her property to them, though she had a son of her own by her husband. Augustine reminds her of St. Paul's direction, which she had broken:‡ and it is indeed observable, with what wisdom, even the most occasional rules of the divine word are delivered, as the breach of them is ever attended with mischievous consequences. He finds fault with her vow in the first place, because made without her husband's consent, and with her disposal of her property in the second place for the same reason; and, as the husband,

* 1 Tim. v. 5.

† Ep. 125.

* Ep. 132.

† Ep. 199.

‡ 1 Cor. vii. 5.

incensed at her folly, had now fallen into libidinous passions, he teaches her to humble herself deeply before God, as having been a great instrument of his fall, and directs her to submit to her husband, to entreat his forgiveness, and to use every healing method in her power. The whole subject is an instance of piety and good sense struggling in the bishop of Hippo, against the torrent of absurdity and fashionable superstition.

At Calama, a colony in Africa, the Pagan interest seems to have much predominated; so that, notwithstanding the imperial laws inhibiting their public rites, the party performed a religious solemnity in the city, and came with a crowd of dancers before the church. The clergy endeavouring to prevent this, the church was attacked with stones. The insult was repeated, and Christians found themselves unable to obtain justice. Their buildings were burned and plundered, one Christian was killed, and the bishop was obliged to hide himself. And so deep-rooted was the prejudice of the colony against Christianity, that the magistrates and men of rank chose to be tame spectators of these enormities. One person alone, a stranger, but as it seems a character of great influence, interposed, saved many Christians, whose lives had been in imminent danger, and recovered much of their property which had been plundered; whence Augustine justly concludes,* how easily the whole mischief might have been checked, had the magistrates done their duty. Nectarius, a Pagan of the place, wrote a neat and graceful letter to the bishop of Hippo, begging his interest with the reigning powers to prevent, as much as possible, the punishment of the guilty. Augustine states to him the facts, as above, and appeals to his conscience, whether it was possible or right for government to overlook such crimes. He shows, that Christians lived in peace and good will toward all men, and that he would do the best he could to procure such a temperance of justice and mercy, as might prevent the repetition of these evils, and induce Pagans to take care of their best interests. He tells him, that he himself had been at Calama lately, and had taken occasion to warn them of the danger of their souls. They heard his exhortation, and entreated his interest. "But God

forbid," says he, "that it should be any pleasure to me to be supplicated by those who refuse to supplicate our Lord." As Nectarius himself had spoken of his love to his country, Augustine is not sparing in his admonitions to him, to seek an acquaintance with a heavenly country, and preaches to him the truth and excellency of the Gospel, as well as exposes, in his usual manner, the futility of Paganism.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISCELLANEOUS PARTICULARS CONCERNING AUGUSTINE.

I HAVE comprised, in several distinct chapters, a variety of matter relating to the bishop of Hippo, for the sake of perspicuity; two more chapters must be added, one containing various articles of his life and conduct, including the account of his death; and the other, a view of his theological character. It is not in my power to gratify the reader with any thing like a regular history of the effusion of the spirit of God, which took place toward the end of the last, and in the beginning of this century. We have a far more particular account of Augustine's literary works, than of his ministerial. On the whole, however, some genuine information may be collected, concerning the great work of God in this day.

The Manichees could not fail to attract a considerable portion of his attention; he had himself suffered extremely through their means; they abounded in Africa, and God abundantly blessed his labours in opposing their doctrines, and in recovering souls which had been seduced. One instance, to the honour of divine grace, deserves to be recorded in the very words of the writer.* "Not only I (Pocidonius) who write this life, but also other brethren, who lived together with the bishop in Hippo, know that he once said to us, being at table together: 'Did you take notice of my sermon to-day in the church, that its beginning and end were not according to my custom; that I did not finish what I proposed, but left my subject in suspense?' We answered,

* Ep. 302.
2 P

* Pocidonius, Vita Aug.

we were at the time astonished, and now recollect it. 'I believe,' said he, 'the reason was, because the Lord, perhaps, intended some erroneous person in the congregation, through my forgetfulness and mistake, to be taught and healed; for, in his hand are we and our discourses. For, while I was handling the points of the question proposed, I was led into a digression, and so, without concluding or explaining the subject in hand, I terminated the argument rather against Manicheism, on which I had no design to have spoken a word, than concerning the matter proposed.' Next day, or two days after, so far as I can remember, came a merchant, called Firmus, and while Augustine was sitting in the monastery, in our presence, he threw himself at his feet, shedding tears, entreating his and our prayers, and confessing that he had lived many years a Manichee; that he had vainly spent much money in the support of that sect, and that, by the bishop's discourses, he had, through divine mercy, been lately convinced of his error, and restored to the church. Augustine and we inquired by what sermon in particular he had been convinced; he informed us; and as we all recollected the substance of that discourse, we admired, and were astonished at the profound counsel of God for the salvation of souls, and we glorified and blessed his holy name, who, when, whence, and as he pleases, by persons knowing and unknown, works out the salvation of men. From that time, the man, devoting himself to God, gave up his business, and, improving in piety, was by the will of God compelled against his own will, in another region, to receive the office of Presbyter, preserving still the same sanctity; and, perhaps, he is yet alive beyond sea."

Augustine detected also the base and blasphemous practices of the Manichees, and thus guarded the minds of the unwary. One of them, by name Felix, coming to Hippo to sow his sentiments, Augustine held a public dispute with him in the church, and, after the second or third conference, Felix owned himself convinced, and received the Gospel.

Arianism also being introduced into Africa by the Goths, who professed it, engaged the attention of Augustine, and he exerted himself in a controversy with Maximinus their bishop.

Of his labours against Pelagianism it

will now only be needful to say,* that he lived to see the fruit of them in the growth of Christian purity, both in his own church and in other parts of Africa.

While he thus endeavoured to promote the cause of piety, he was always observed to bear, with much patience and meekness, the irregularities of the perverse, and to be more disposed to mourn over them with grief, than resent them with anger.

To the manifold labours of this bishop in preaching, visiting, and writing, was added the troublesome employment of hearing causes. For, according to the rules of 1 Cor. vi. the Christians of Hippo used to bring matters of controversy before the bishop. And the examination and decision of these engaged him till the hour of repast, and some times he was employed in them fasting the whole day. Certainly it is not reasonable that a Christian pastor should be stately employed in such things: but Augustine, following the customary practice of the time, made it subservient to the purest purposes. He had by this an opportunity of examining the dispositions of his people, and their improvements and defects in faith and good works; and he explained to them, occasionally, their duties as Christians, by opening to them the word of God, by exhorting them to piety, and by rebuking sinners: And in all this he acted with perfect disinterestedness.

In attendance on councils he was frequent, and in them he distinguished himself in the defence both of Christian doctrine and discipline. In ordaining clergymen, he took care to follow the custom of the church, and to act with the concurrence of the majority of the people.† His dress, furniture, and diet, were moderated between extremes; and it will deserve to be mentioned, as an instance of superiority to popular superstition, that he always drank wine, but with great moderation. He constantly practised hospitality; and at table encouraged reading or argument; and as his spirit, ever humble and tender since his conversion, could not bear the too fashionable mode of detraction and slander, he had a distich written on his table, which intimated, that whoever attacked the characters of the absent were to be

* Possidonius.

† Id.

excluded.* Nor was he content with a formal declaration; he seriously warned his guests to abstain from defamations, "On one occasion," says his biographer, "some bishops, his intimate friends, breaking the rule in conversation, he at length was so much roused as to say, that either those lines must be erased from the table, or he himself would rise from the midst of the meal, and go into his bedchamber; and of this I and others who were present are witnesses."

He was conscientiously attentive to the wants of the poor, and sedulously relieved them out of the revenues of the church, or the oblations of the faithful. And, in answer to the invidious complaints of some concerning the riches amassed by the church, he freely offered to give them up to any of the laity who would take the charge of them. Doubtless the growth of superstition was even then bringing on that accession of wealth to the clergy, which afterwards grew to so enormous a height. But purer hands than those of Augustine never handled the possessions of the Church; he seems changeable, even with intention to his own rights; as he committed the whole of the temporal to his clergy in succession, and never made himself sufficiently acquainted with particulars, to be able, from his own inspection, to correct any mismanagement. He himself lived perfectly unconnected with the world, at one table and in one house, with his clergy, and never purchased house or land. He checked also the fashionable method of men's leaving their possessions to the church, whenever he saw reason to think that the testators had near relations, who, in justice and equity, had a preferable claim. With much pleasure did he withdraw as soon as possible from any secular cares which he had not been able to avoid, that he might give himself wholly to divine things. Hence he always remained, as much as possible, content with old hallings and manseles, lest he should be entangled with concerns of this nature. Yet to relieve the indigent, and to redeem captives, he scrupled not to sell the vessels of the church, after the example of Ananias.

His abstinence from the society of wo-

men we should think, in our times, to have been carried beyond the due bounds; yet it hindered not his provident care for their spiritual welfare.

A little before his death, he was employed in revising and correcting his works. This care produced the publication of his REFRACTIONS, the chief use of which book is, that it enables us to fix, with a considerable degree of precision, what were his GENUINE works and thoughts. It pleased God, however, not to suffer him to depart this life without a cloud of grievous affliction; and the relish of heaven, after which for many years he had panted with uncommon ardour, was quickened still more by a bitter taste of the evils of this life in declining age.

Geneseric, king of the Vandals, invaded Africa, and made a dreadful desolation. To the tender mind of Augustine,* the

* The tenderness of his spirit, on one occasion led him into an error in conduct, which much afflicted him. Fussala was a little city in the extremity of his diocese, forty miles from Hippo. The country about it was full of Donatists, and their resort to the church was accompanied with much difficulty. The priests sent by Augustine were married, blinded, or murdered. Augustine, on account of this distance, was not capable of serving the people as he could wish; and he at length determined to settle a bishop there, who should undertake the charge of Fussala and the neighbouring district. As soon as he had found a proper priest, he desired the primate of Numidia to come over, and in consultation with himself ordain him. The priest, whom he had chosen, retreated, and the primate was arrived. Augustine was unwilling to send him back without doing the business, and through the leniency of his temper was inclined to promise, for ordination, a young man named Anthony, whom he had from infancy educated in his monastery, who had never been used as an agent to have been. The bishop of Hippo had some reason to suspect of his good nature. The young priest was complained of by his flock, for his simplicity and benevolence, and was too generous in his manners to be endured any longer. The objection with Fussala was therefore dissolved by a formal sentence. Anthony, however, according to the custom of Rome, who were obliged to support him. Augustine treated on the grounds of his reputation and sanctity, that sanctimony the first man himself, as well as for the people, whom he had so much pleased, required that the sentence should be supported, and he should be banished still more in indignity. Anthony himself made restitution of the sums of which he had despoiled them; yet he prevailed afterwards on the primate of Numidia to believe him innocent, and to interest himself in his favour. The spirit of Augustine, then threescore and eight years of age, was much broken with this affair. He condemned his own imprudence, and observed, that the danger into which An-

* Quisquis amat dictis abstinenti potestatem vitam, Hanc mensam ventilem noverit esse sibi.
Poes.

devastation of the country, the cruelties inflicted on the pastors, the desolation of all churches, and the destruction of all church-order which ensued, must have been peculiarly afflicting. Count Boniface, one of the greatest Roman heroes of those times, undertook the defence of Hippo against the Barbarians. He had not been without convictions of divine things, and Augustine, who was intimate with him, had endeavoured to improve these convictions to salutary purposes. But, to seek human glory, and the honour which cometh from God only, at the same time, was found to be incompatible. Boniface gained a shining reputation, and followed the world. In these trying times the bishop of Hippo again endeavoured to draw him from the love of the world to God, and Boniface seems all along to have sinned reluctantly. What God might do for him at last, during the time that he lived after the mortal wound, which he received in a duel, we know not. The man, however, was brave and sincere, and had a steady regard for men of real godliness. He defended Hippo for fourteen months, which, after that time, with all Africa, fell under the power of the Vandals.

But Augustine was taken away from the evil to come. While he mourned under the miseries of the times, in company with Possidonius and several bishops, who had fled for shelter to Hippo, he told them, that he had prayed, either that God would free them from the siege, or endure his servants with patience, or take him out of the world to himself. In the third month of the siege he was seized with a fever, which ended in his dissolution, in the year 430. He lived seventy-six years, forty of which he had been a presbyter or bishop. He used to say, that a Christian should never cease to repent, even to the hour of his death. He had David's penitential psalms inscribed on the wall, in his last sickness,

and he read and wept abundantly; and for ten days before he expired he desired to be uninterrupted, that he might give himself wholly to devotion, except at certain intervals. He had preached the word of God constantly, till his last sickness. He left no will: he had neither money nor lands to leave. He left his library to the church. Of his own relations he had taken competent care before. "In his writings," says Possidonius, "the holy man appears: but those who could have heard and seen him speak in public, and particularly in private conversation, would have seen still more." Pity it is, that a man, who had known him for forty years, should have left us so imperfect an account. But the vigour of the human mind was then much declined, and superstition made men childish, though it did not destroy the spirit of piety.

CHAPTER IX.

THE THEOLOGY OF AUGUSTINE.

THE serious reader, from a consideration of the mournful condition of the African churches in regard to external things at the time of Augustine's death, will naturally be led to inquire what became of them after the decease of this prelate. It is ever to be remembered, that the real prosperity of the church is not to be estimated by outward circumstances. The Roman empire was dissolving on all sides; and its fairest provinces in Africa fell into barbarous hands at the time of Augustine's death. But the light which, through his means, had been kindled, was not extinct; for, as it depended not on the grandeur of the Roman empire, so neither was it extinguished by its decline. We shall have an opportunity of visiting Africa again, and at present shall close the whole narrative of Augustine, with a brief view of his Theology. The subject is important, not only as tending to illustrate the revival of the Gospel in the West in his time, but also as exhibiting the views of the best and wisest Christians in Europe from that period to the days of Luther. For a thousand years and upwards, the light of divine grace, which shone here and there in individuals, during the dreary night of superstition, was nourished by his writings, which, next to the sacred Scriptures, were the guides of men who feared God; nor have

they had cast both himself and the people, so much affected him, that he was almost resolved to relinquish the episcopal office, and bewail his error, the remainder of his days, in privacy. As it appears that Augustine still governed the church of Fussala after this, it seems that the dispute was settled to his satisfaction, and that Anthony was not restored to his See. The story deserves to be noticed, as illustrating the church discipline of the times, and the character of Augustine.

† Ep. 209.

† Ep. 224.

we in all history an instance of so extensive utility derived to the church from the writings of men.

From the review of the Pelagian controversy, the attentive reader will see, that the article of justification* must be involved in Augustine's divinity; and doubtless it savingly flourished in his heart, and in the hearts of many of his followers; yet the precise and accurate nature of the doctrine itself seems not to have been understood by this holy man. He perpetually understands St. Paul's term to justify, of INHERENT RIGHTEOUSNESS, as if it meant, SANCTIFICATION; still he knew what faith in the Redeemer meant; and those parts of Scripture, which speak of forgiveness of sins, he understands, he feels, he loves; but St. Paul's writings concerning justification he understands not sufficiently, because the precise idea of that doctrine entered not formally into his divinity.

I have given, if I mistake not, the outlines of Augustine's views in this most important Christian doctrine. It had been pitifully misused, as it were, in the rubbish of the growing superstition, and had been gradually sinking in the church from Justin's days to his own. And I more admire, that he was enabled to recover its constituent parts so well as he did, than that he did not arrange and adjust them perfectly. Much can be pleaded to represent him as a contradictory writer. I suspect that this writer's propensities warped his understanding. In truth, if our author's sentiments be understood, he will appear, from his own plan, to be one of the most consistent writers in the world; and, if we make allowance for his mistake in the point just mentioned, which yet he himself, though not explicitly, understands, few writers, I think, in any age, may be read with more profit.

To what has been delivered from his writings on the subject of justification, little needs to be added here. Two quotations deserve to be read, on account of the solid truth which they contain. "He was made sin, as we are made righteousness, not our own, but of God; nor in ourselves, but in him, as he was made sin, not his own, but ours; nor was he appointed so in himself, but in us."†

* I have introduced here a few sentences out of the Theological Miscellany for September 1785, taken from an Essay on Justification, which I wrote in that publication.

† Ezechiel. ad Lauren. c. 41.

See this blessed doctrine illustrated experimentally in his exposition of the 130th Psalm, 2, 3, 4. "Behold he cries under the load of his iniquities. He looked round himself, he surveyed his life, he saw it on all sides covered with flagitiousness; wherever he looked, he found no good in himself. And he saw on all sides so great and so many sins, that trembling, as it were, he cried out, If then, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, who shall stand? For he saw almost the whole of human life surrounded with sins, like barking dogs; all consciences to be upbraided; not a holy heart to be found that could presume on its own righteousness: which, because it cannot be found, therefore let every heart rest on the mercy of the Lord his God, and say, if thou, Lord, &c. But what is my hope? There is a propitiation with thee." So constantly, in all ages, do real good men feel alike on this subject: "The humble shall hear and be glad."

The peculiar work for which Augustine was evidently raised by Providence was, to restore the doctrine of divine grace to the church. A vain philosophy and corrupted it partially under Justin, far more completely under Origen. What wonder: To trust in ourselves was the avowed boast of all the Philosophers. An idea of providential kindness in external things floated in the minds of some; but virtue and every internal excellence they expected only from themselves.* In this they only copied the impression of that self-righteousness which is natural to all. The distinguishing glory of the Gospel is to teach humility, and to give to God his due honour; and Augustine was singularly prepared for this by a course of internal experience. He had felt human insufficiency completely, and knew, "that in himself dwelt no good thing." Hence he was admirably qualified to describe the total degeneracy and apostasy of human nature, and he described what he knew to be true. Thus, in the West, the doctrine

* Hear Tully, de Nat. Deor. Virtutem nemini unquam Deo acceptam retulit nimium recte; propter virtutem suam jura laudamus, et in virtute recte gloriamur, quod non contemneret, si daretur a Deo, non a nobis habere. It is sufficient to tell the English reader, that in this sentence the same self-sufficiency of the human heart, which mere moral preaching encourages, is expressed by the Pagan philosopher, as the undoubted creed of all mankind.

of grace was happily revived; and romantic theories, built on mere reasonings, gave way to scriptural truth, supported by experience. And, in all ages, in spite of pride and prejudice, the doctrine of grace has this advantage over the minds of men, that conscience, wherever it is awakened to do its office, always speaks in its favour.

The rise and progress of Pelagianism gave Augustine an opportunity of illustrating the doctrine of grace in the strongest manner. He himself was by no means forward and urgent in the work. Those, who have spoken of him as heated with the spirit of controversy, knew not Augustine.* He was rather slow and cautious in controversy, and so are all men of argumentative minds and humble dispositions. He was by no means at first so clear in his ideas of salvation being altogether of grace, as he afterwards was: particularly, that faith was altogether the gift of God, was not a proposition so clear to his mind, till deeper experience and more attentive search of the Scriptures confirmed him in the truth. When, in his inquiries after divine truth, he was led to see and to be fully convinced of the total apostasy of man; and when he reflected, that he himself was changed by effectual grace, not only without the co-operation, but even in spite of the resistance of his nature, he was gradually brought to acquiesce in St. Paul's views of predestination. It was a doctrine that, with him, followed experimental religion, as a shadow follows the substance; it was not embraced for its own sake. He wrote sparingly, however, upon it for a long time, content to give plain scripture testimonies, and fearful of involving the bulk of readers in inextricable labyrinths.

It is the impious boldness of heretics, avowedly opposing divine truths, because they are above their reason, which at length necessitates modest and cautious spirits to speak out more plainly concerning the deep truths of God, lest they should leave them to the insults of the enemy. In the further progress of the controversy, the most daring attempts were made to erase from men's minds all ideas of grace; and the specious attempts of Semi-Pelagianism in France seemed ready to overthrow the arguments of Augustine in the minds of many.

The Eastern church, for the most part, more philosophical than the Western, was infected with those half views of grace; and, unless the bishop of Hippo meant by silence to give countenance to opinions, supported only by corrupt nature, reasoning pride, and the authority of some great names in the church, it behoved him to defend the doctrine of efficacious grace more explicitly. He did so at length, particularly in his latter writings;† he proves the truth from Scripture, appealing to its simple grammatical sense; and as the Antinomian contempt of the use of means appeared in some warm, but injudicious admirers of his doctrine, he states this matter also with his usual strength of argument and perspicuity, and shows the consistency between the exhortations and the decrees of God.

Another subject, of which the reader, versed in theological controversy, would wish to be informed, is, whether Augustine held "particular redemption." Very few words will suffice for this. He constantly connects the doctrine of grace with the influences of the Holy Spirit; I cannot find that he does so with the redemption of the Son of God. In one place, the text, "who would have all to be saved," is explained by him ambiguously and variously. But, in truth, whether Christ died only for the elect, or for all men, was never the object of his controversies; and certainly, in his practical discourses, he always represents the sacrifice of Christ as universal; so every preacher should do, if he means to profit his hearers. On occasion of the controversy, Augustine was objected to, as denying that Christ died for all. But Prosper, his admirer and follower, and as strict a predestinarian as any writer in any age, maintains that Augustine held, "that Christ gave himself a ransom for all." Doubtless the natural and obvious sense of Scripture is the same,‡ and the notion of particular redemption was unknown to the ancients, and I wish it had remained equally unknown to the mo-

* In the foregoing deduction I have attended to the progress of things, as they appear from the publication of Augustine's works at different times. To cite particular passages would be tedious: to those who read him for themselves, needless—to those who do not, uninteresting.

† See particularly 1 Tim. ii.

* Viz. Grotius.

darns. But let us mention the peculiar excellence of his theology.

Humility is his theme. A man may hold the doctrines of grace in the clearest manner, yet himself be proud. He may not have a distinct view of some of them, particularly that of which we have been speaking, yet he may be humble; though without some real knowledge of grace it is impossible he should be so. But the true advantage of just and accurate Christian sentiments, is, that they teach humility. Am I obliged to support the doctrines of grace by such arguments as mere human reason, unassisted by revelation, could invent? No: I confess reason in this sense is beneath them; and if I be truly humble, I shall be content to bear the scorn of philosophers for the confession. Augustine taught men what it is to be humble before God. This he does every where with godly simplicity, with inexpressible seriousness. And in doing this no writer, uninspired, ever excelled. I am apt to think ever equalled him, in any age. They wrong this father much, who view him as a mere controversialist. Practical godliness was his theme, and he constantly connects all his views of grace with humility.*

Few writers have been equal to him in describing the internal conflict of flesh and spirit, mysterious but certain, ignorantly confounded by philosophers with the conflict between reason and passion, and misrepresented by the profane as enthusiasm. He describes this in a manner unknown to any but those who have deeply felt it; and the Pelagian pretensions to perfection oblige him to say more than otherwise would be needful, to prove that the most humble, and the most

holy, have, through life, to combat with indwelling sin.

Two more practical subjects he delights to handle, charity* and heavenly-mindedness. In both he excels wonderfully, and I shall only wish young students in divinity to convince themselves of this by reading him. A reference of all things to a future life, and the depth of humble love, appear in all his writings; as in truth, from the moment of his conversion, they influenced all his practice. For he never seems to have lost his first love. Hence there is manifest in his works a singular innocence of spirit. No pride, no self-conceit, no bitterness, ever discover themselves in any expression. Calm, equable, modest, cautious of offending, never pathetic, except when roused by zealous love of God and his neighbour; these are the lights in which he constantly exhibits himself. The times were highly unfavourable, the defects of superstition often cloud his writings; yet, at intervals, he vigorously struggles against it, and in one passage particularly laments the growing servilities, the straining at a gnat, and the swallowing of a camel, owning that he conformed, through love of peace and charity, to some things.

His own words well deserve to be quoted, as they evidence the power of good

* I do not remember to have seen a controversial writer of so charitable a spirit as Augustine, in matters of dispute. The proofs of this are endless. Take a single instance, and see how he treats an opponent. "If, in the heat of the dispute, an injurious word may have escaped him, I am willing to think it arose from the necessity of supporting his opinions, rather than from the design of offending me. For when I am a stranger to the temper of a man, I think it much better to have a good opinion of him, than to blame him too hastily. Perhaps he had a kind intention, desiring to undeceive me. In that case I am obliged to him for his good will, though I am under a necessity of disapproving his sentiments."†

His own practice which he mentions, deserves to be attended to by all controversialists. "When I answer any person in speaking or writing, though provoked by contumacious language, so far as the Lord affords to me, I bridle myself, and restrain the spurs of vain indignation; I consult for the hearer or reader, and thus endeavour not to be superior to another in railing, but to be more salutary by convincing him of his error. B. 3. against Petilian.

† Ep. 166.

* This virtue ever appears conspicuous in Augustine, and perpetually checks the daring and adventurous spirit of investigation, which, as a man of genius and letters, formed a striking part of his character. In speaking of the difficulties attending the doctrine of original sin, he abhors every idea of attempting to solve them in an unscriptural manner. He chooses rather to be content with his ignorance, than to be content with his ignorance by your means (he is writing to Jerome); nevertheless, if I cannot obtain it, I will pray for patience; since we believe in him, with a promise never to murmur, though he doth not lead us into perfect knowledge of some particular things. I am ignorant of many things, more than I can enumerate."

† Letters to Jerom. Aug. Ep. 165.

sense and divine grace united in withstanding the prevailing torrent. "I cannot approve the new practices introduced almost with as much solemnity as sacraments; neither dare I censure them too freely, lest I should give offence to any one; but it grieves me, that so many salutary precepts of Scripture should be held cheap, while our religion abounds with commandments of mere men.—Therefore, as to all those customs which are not contained in the Scripture, ordained by councils, or sanctioned by the tradition of the church, and which do not carry in their appearance an evident reason for their existence, I am free to say, they ought to be laid aside. Admit, it cannot be proved, that they are contrary to the faith; yet they burden religion with servile usages, which God, in his mercy, intended to make free: in this respect the condition of the Jews is more tolerable; they are subject indeed, but to divine ordinances, not to the precepts of men. However, the Church, surrounded as she is with chaff and tares, endures many things, yet she cannot tolerate what is contrary to Christian faith and practice." He particularly condemns the custom of divining by the Gospel, and of managing temporal concerns according to words which strike the eye at the first opening of the book.

His conduct toward the Donatists bids the fairest for reprehension; but he acted sincerely: you differ with him in judgment, but it is impossible for you to blame his temper and spirit, if you read him candidly. He carefully checks his people for calumniating the Donatists, and is constantly employed in moderating and healing.

Finally, in Ethics he is superior to most. On the subject of veracity and of faithfulness to oaths, and in general in the practice of justice, in the love of mercy, and in walking humbly with his God, as he wrote most admirably, so he practised most sincerely.

CHAPTER X.

THE LIFE AND WORKS OF JEROM.

THIS renowned monk was born at Stridon, a town in the confines of Dalmatia

and Pannonia, under the emperor Constantine, in the year 331. The place was obscure, and was rendered still more so by the desolations of the Goths. Nor

Jerom
born,
A. D. 331.

is it a very clear case whether it ought to be looked on as part of Italy or not.* That Jerom was of a liberal and opulent family, appears from the pains taken with his education, which was finished at Rome, that he might there acquire the graces of Latinity. He was in truth the most learned of the Roman fathers, and was eminent both for genius and industry. He was brought up in Christianity from infancy, and hence, like other good men, who have had the same advantages, he appears never to have known the extreme conflicts with indwelling sin, which, to later converts, have given so much pain, and often have rendered them more eminently acquainted with vital religion.

After his baptism at Rome, he travelled into France, in company with Bonosus, a fellow-student. He examined libraries, and collected information from all quarters; and, returning into Italy, he determined to follow the profession of a monk: a term, which did not, at that time, convey the modern idea of the word. In Jerom's time, it meant chiefly the life of a private recluse Christian, who yet was fettered by no certain rules nor vows, but acted according to his own pleasure. Such a life suited the disposition of a studious person like Jerom. He was, however, made a presbyter of the church, but never would proceed any further in ecclesiastical dignity. He spent four years in the deserts of Syria, reading and studying with immense industry. A commentary on the prophet Obadiah, which he published, bore strong marks of juvenile indiscretion, as he afterwards frankly owned. And here, by the assistance of a Jew, who visited him, Nicodemus-like, in the evenings, lest he should give umbrage to his brethren, he acquired the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, and with indefatigable labour he studied also the Chaldee and the Syriac.

On his return to Rome, he became intimate with Paula, the illustrious descendant of the Pauls, so famous in Roman story, with Marcella, and other opulent ladies. The monastic life, which had long flourished in the East, was only

* Ep. to Januarius, 119.

* Erasm. Life of Jerom, prefixed to his Works.

beginning to be fashionable in the West. The renowned Athanasius, and his Egyptian friends, rendered respectable, during their exile at Rome, by their sufferings for the faith, contributed to throw a dignity on such a course of life: and the zeal of Jerom nursed the same spirit among serious persons. The ladies I have mentioned, were hence induced to impart a celebrity to the monastic taste by their own example.

Paula, her daughter Eustochium, her son-in-law Pammachius, Marcella, and others, admired and revered Jerom; and he, whose temper was cholerick and imperious to a great degree, seems to have lived in much harmony with females, probably because he more easily gained submission from them than from persons of his own sex.

Spleen and calumny hastened the departure of Jerom from Rome. This great man had not learned to command his passions, and to disregard the breath of fame. Unjust aspersions on his character affected him with a very blameable acrimony. He retired again to the East: there several of his admirers followed him. He chose Bethlehem as the seat of his old age, where Paula erected four monasteries, three for the women, over which she presided, and one for the men, in which Jerom lived the rest of his life, enjoying at times the society of his learned friends. He instructed the women also in theology, and Paula died, after having lived twenty years in the monastery.

I shall not spend any time in vindicating the chastity of Jerom, because his whole life was a sufficient answer to calumny in that respect. He

Jerom was certainly serious in the very best sense of the word, and died in the 91st year of his age, in the year 420.

Yet it is to be lamented, that a man of so great sincerity, and of a mind so vigorous, should have been of so little service to mankind. The truth is, his knowledge of theology was contracted and low. He confessed, that while he macerated his body in the deserts, he was thinking of the pleasures and delights of Rome. He understood not the true Gospel-mystery of mortifying sin, and, by his voluntary humility and neglect of the body, added to the fame and splendour of his voluminous but ill-digested learning, he contributed more than any other person of antiquity to the growth of superstition. His

quarrel with Rufinus is a reproach to both their memories. Yet, of the two, Jerom seems to have been more evangelical in his views; because Origen was erroneous in his doctrines: and it is a sufficient account of so uninteresting a controversy to say, that Rufinus defended, Jerom accused, Origen.

For the view of his controversy with Augustine, I must refer the reader to the accounts of that Father of the Church.

Jerom was, however, humble before God, and truly pious: and of him it must be said, to the honour of Christian godliness, how much worse a man he would have been, had he not known Christ Jesus; and how much better, if he had known him with more clearness and perspicuity!

The works of a writer so superstitious, though sound in the essentials of Christianity, will not deserve a very particular review. Here and there a vigorous and evangelical sentiment breaks out amidst the clouds. His epistles discover him to have been sincere and heavenly-minded, though his temper was cholerick. In a letter to Nepotian* there are various rules worthy the attention of Pastors, concerning the contempt of riches, the avoiding of secular familiarities, and the regulation of external conduct. One observation will deserve to be distinctly remembered: "A clergyman easily subjects himself to contempt, who never represses invitations to dinner, however frequent."

He wrote an epitaph upon the death of this same Nepotian sometime after,† eloquent, pious, pathetic. In this he confesses the doctrine of original sin, and celebrates the victory of Christ over death. He makes an excellent use of the public miseries of the times, by recommending more strongly a practical attention to piety. Hence, also, he makes the best apology which could be invented for his favourite solitude.

In his letter; to Rusticus the monk, the learned reader, who would see a practical comment on St. Paul's cautions against voluntary humility in the Epistle to the Colossians, may behold it in Jerom. He

abounds in self-devised ways of obtaining holiness, while the true way of humble faith in Jesus is not despised indeed, but little attended to.

Jerom's epitaph on the death of Nepotian.

His letter to Rusticus.

* Paris Edit. vol. i. 6 C.

† Id. 8 D.

A short letter to Florentius shows genuine humility and acquiescence in Christ, as his sole hope, after all his austerities.

Another letter to Florentius

He calls himself a polluted sinner altogether; "yet, because the Lord sets free the captives and looks to the humble and the contrite, perhaps he may say to me also, lying in the grave of wickedness, Jerom, come forth." It was this humble faith in Christ which checked the impetuosity and arrogance of his natural temper, repressed his vain-glory, and in some degree changed a lion into a lamb. For Jerom, though exactly formed by constitution and habit, to sustain the character of a Pharisee, was too deeply conscious of internal pollution to be one in reality.

Toxotius, the son of Paula, had married Laeta, by whom he had a daughter, whom the grandmother destined to virginity. Jeron writes to the mother,* advising, that the child be sent to Bethlehem, when grown up, and promising himself to superintend her education. At present he gives rules for her education, while an infant, which are useful, but mixed with superstition. Laeta's father, it seems, was a Pagan. Jerom, however, despairs not of his conversion: "All things, he says, are possible with God. Conversion it never too late. The thief from the cross passed into Paradise. Despair not of your Father's salvation. A relation of yours, Gracchus, whose very name is expressive of patrician nobility, a few years ago broke in pieces and burnt the images of idolatry, and received the faith of Christ." Behold the spirit of meekness and charity adorning one of the most rugged tempers in the world, and admire the effect of victorious grace in Jerom.

I am disgusted with the repeated lessons of superstition with which his epistles present us. He knew, however,

Jerom writes to Paula.

better things. In a letter to his Paula, he rebuked her immoderate sorrow for the death of her daughter Blesilla, in strains at once evangelical and tender.† In a letter to Pammachius,‡ who became a monk after the decease of his wife Paulina, the daughter of Paula, he speaks with holy rapture on the love of Christ, according to the ideas of the book of Canticles: "Whether you read or write, or watch or sleep, let love al-

ways sound a trumpet in your ears; let this trumpet excite your soul; overpowered with this love, seek in your bed Him whom your soul loveth." How much is it to be regretted, that Jerom and his friends should have so hidden their talent; that persons who loved Christ sincerely, had not learned, like the Apostles and first Christians, to profess him in the most public walks of society, and by preaching and conversation to have instructed mankind in general! But such conduct would have required a self-denial and a charity, larger and of a more sublime nature than theirs; to live in the world, and yet remain separate from it, shows a divine strength indeed.

Jerom confesses, that Gregory Nazianzen was his preceptor in theological expositions.* The eastern mode, thus caught by Jerom, and pursued by a mind eager, and adorned with learning and eloquence, became highly respected in the West.—Jerom, as a theologian, seems greatly inferior to his contemporary Augustine, though in style and diction superior.

In the foregoing century, Jovinian, an Italian monk, taught, first at Rome, and afterwards at Milan, some points of doctrine directly opposite to the Jovinian's doctrines, growing superstitions. It is not easy to state, with confidence, either the character or the sentiments of the man. His works are lost. The most celebrated teachers of the Church opposed him vehemently. Ambrose, Jerom, and Augustine, joined their testimonies against him. The last, indeed, wrote very little, and that little from popular rumour, rather than from any distinct knowledge of the subject; for the weight of popular prejudice overwhelmed Jovinian speedily, so that his doctrines could never enter Africa, nor give the bishop of Hippo an opportunity of knowing him. Had this been the case, I should have expected, from his candour and judgment, that fair and distinct delineation of Jovinian, which we seek in vain from the cholerick and prejudiced Jerom. We have of the latter two books against Jovinian,† intemperate, fierce, and ill-supported by Scripture or argument. I have endeavoured, as well as I can, to discover what were his real opinions;‡

* 106 D.

† Tom. xi. 7 D.

‡ Whatever they were, he was condemned in a council, held by Ambrose at Milan, as a

* 19 G.

† 57 G.

‡ 59 G.

but, in wading through the torrent of Jerom's abuse, I find no very certain vestiges; such is the violence and intemperance of his spirit and language. One single quotation is all that I can discover, which can be called Jovinian's own, the language of which is barbarous in the extreme, and justifies Jerom's censure upon him in one respect, as a man void of all classical culture and elegance. The sense of it* seems to be this: "Having satisfied those who were invited to hear me, not for the sake of my glory, but that I may deliver myself from unjust accusations, I sow my field, and visit the new plantations, the tender shrubs, delivered from the whirlpool of vices, fortified by troops. For we know the Church, through hope, faith, and charity, inaccessible, invincible. In her there are none immature, every one is teachable; none can subdue her by violence, or elude her by art."

I admire the positiveness of Mosheim in deciding so prematurely for the character of a man,† of whose writings

Mosheim nothing has come down to us, but a single sentence so barbarous and doubtful. Certainly he opposed the prejudices in favour of concubacy and fasting. A monk himself, he disclaimed any superior dignity or estimation, on account of his abstinence from matrimony; nor did he think that fasting added any intrinsic excellence to a character. Thus far is certain; and that he saw so much truth in such an age, proves him doubtless to have been a man of strong sense and manly understanding. But before I dare call him "a worthy opposer of the reigning superstitions," I ought to know his motives. He might be influenced by the pure love of God, the faith of Jesus, and unfeigned humility. He might be moved by a spirit merely prebendal, worldly, and even profane. For true Christians and Deists will unite in opposing superstition, from motives very opposite. We are, indeed, always strongly inclined to think well of those persons in past ages, who happened to favour our peculiar sentiments or prejudices; and, on the contrary, we are apt to judge harshly of those who thought in a different manner. Does this propensity account for Mosheim's hasty approbation of the character of Jovinian?

heretic, and was, by the emperor Honorius, banished to the island Bos.

* & G. † Mosheim, Cent. iv. c. iii. 22.

Whether it does or not in this instance, I cannot but observe, that this sort of mental imbecility forms one of the most capital defects of that ecclesiastical historian: as to myself, I can only say, I endeavour to guard against it.

Let us hear, however, what are the four propositions of Jovinian. I wish I could give them in his own words, instead of those of his adversary. The first is, that virgins, widows, and married women, who have once been washed in Christ, if in other works they differ

The four propositions of Jovinian.

not, are of the same excellence. Secondly, he endeavours to prove, that those who have been regenerated cannot be subverted by the devil. The third shows, that there is no distinction in the sight of God, between those who abstain from meats, and those who receive them with thanksgiving. The fourth, that all who keep their baptism shall be equally rewarded in the kingdom of heaven.

From information so scanty, two very opposite opinions may be deduced: first, that Jovinian, blest with divine illumination, and the faith of God's elect, entered fully into the spirit of apostolical Christianity, condemned the self-righteous taste of the times in ascribing merit to intrinsic excellence, to fasting, and celibacy; recommended them only as external helps of godliness in certain cases; placed all the hope of salvation on the grace of Jesus in unfeigned faith and humility; asserted the perpetuity of this grace in the elect; and while he reprobated the fictitious virtues of proud men, was zealous for the glory of God and his Christ. Whether this was Jovinian's view or not, it undoubtedly was that of the apostles. If it was his, he was no heretic, as he has been represented, but a faithful confessor of Christ. That which strongly inclines me to hope, on the whole, that this was his real character, and that even good men of his age were deceived concerning him, is the soundness with which he interprets Scripture in the few instances to be collected from Jerom's confused account. He observes that those who fell were only baptized with water, not with the Holy Ghost, as appears from the case of Simon Magus, showing from St. John, that he who is born of God doth not commit sin. He mentions the presence of Jesus at the marriage of Cana, in support of his vindication of matrimony; to which Jerom returns an answer too ridiculous to

deserve mentioning. There are other things in Jerom's opposition, weak beyond measure, and which show that sound argumentation was not the talent of this celebrated Father.

If, on the other hand, Jovinian's opposition to the fashionable austerities sprang from the love of the world; if he held that all sins were really equal, and that the devil had no power at all to draw the regenerate into sin, he might be a Stoic, an Epicurean, an Antinomian; a character very remote from that of a Christian. A little clear information of Jovinian's own life, and even a larger specimen of his writings, might have solved this doubt.

About the beginning of this century, Vigilantius, a presbyter, a man remarkable for eloquence, who was born in Gaul, and afterwards performed his ecclesiastical functions in Spain, treading in the steps of Jovinian, exhorted and wrote with much energy

Brief account of Vigilantius.

against the custom of performing vigils in temples consecrated to martyrs, and against the whole apparatus of pilgrimages, relics, addresses to saints, voluntary poverty, and the like. I have here to regret, as in the former instance, the want of materials for estimating the character of this man, whom Mosheim scruples not to call the good Vigilantius.* He quotes indeed Bayle's dictionary; whence I gather, that the presbyter before us was agreeable to that self-conceited sceptic; but the ambiguity remains unremoved. He might oppose superstition from the faith and love of Christ, or from profaneness and sensuality. As no specific blot, however, is affixed to the moral characters of Jovinian and Vigilantius, amidst an intemperate effusion of satire, the probability is, on the whole, that they were pious men, and deserved to be ranked in a very different class from that of heretics.

Jerom wrote apologies for his books against Jovinian,† which gave additional strength to the charges of asperity justly brought against him by many. His commendation of rhetoric is excessive, and his vain-glory odious, though it seems unknown to himself. The best instruction to be collected from them is, to see how the defect of Christian principle fails not to appear in the defect of hu-

mility, meekness, and love. Augustine and Jerom, in principles and practice, form in this respect a strong contrast. The pieces against Vigilantius deserve the same censure. He absurdly gives to saints a sort of omnipresence and intercessory power.

I have said already, that the contest between Jerom and Rufinus is uninteresting. It is a deplorable evidence of the weakness and corruption of human nature, even in men constantly engaged in religious studies! A sincere and practical attention to the real peculiarities of the Gospel, can alone secure the genuine holiness of professors, and mortify the whole body of sin. When Jerom is calm and unruffled, and looks to Jesus Christ in faith and love, he seems quite another man from what he is when engaged in controversy. For a single page of Jovinian or Vigilantius, I would gladly give up the whole invectives of Jerom and Rufinus.

It is remarkable, that Jerom confesses the vast obscurity of the whole Epistle to the Romans.* To one who studied so much, and whose mind was so clouded with self-righteous superstitions, it must appear in that light. He evidently speaks as one irresolute, embarrassed, and confused. His immensity of verbal learning, in which he much excelled Augustine, was not combined with that luminous perspicuity, and comprehensive judgment of doctrine, which enabled the latter to see his way through various mazes, and to find order and beauty, where the former beheld inextricable confusion. Such is the difference between divine and human teaching!

Hence Jerom, in his very voluminous expositions,† speaks at random; is allegorical beyond all bounds, and almost always without accuracy and precision; lowers the doctrine of illumination in 1 Cor. ii. to things merely moral and practical; hints at something like a first and second justification before God; asserts predestination, and, as it were, retracts it, owns a good will as from God in one place, in another supposes a power to choose to be the whole of divine grace; never opposes fundamental truths deliberately, but though he owns them every where, always does so defectively, and often inconsistently. It must be con-

* Mosheim, Cent. v. c. iii. 14.
† 37 D. 43 D. 44 G.

* 58 D. Tom. ult. of vol. i.
† Vol. ii. throughout.

fessed, the reputation of this father's knowledge and abilities has been much over-rated. There is a splendour in a profusion of ill-digested learning, coloured by a lively imagination, which is often mistaken for sublimity of genius. This was Jerome's case; but this was not the greatest part of the evil. His learned ignorance availed, more than any other cause, to give a celebrity to superstition in the Christian world, and to darken the light of the Gospel. Yet, when he was untroubled by contradiction, and engaged in meditations unconnected with superstition, he could speak with Christian affection concerning the characters and offices of the Son of God.

It was a marvellous effect of Divine Providence, that while all other truths were more or less clouded, that which relates to the person of the Son of God, on whose rests the salvation of men, should remain unclouded. From St. John's days to Jerome we have seen the whole church unanimous in a comprehensive view of the Godhead and manhood of the divine Saviour: whoever opposed either, could never obtain the free sanction of the church. Impetuous violence was ever found necessary to extort the admission of such persons into the church as pastors. This essential article of Christianity seems even to have been studied with the minutest accuracy; and few perhaps, even of the best modern divines, have attained the precision of the ancients. Heresidarchs have not failed to take advantage of this circumstance, and the narrow and imperfect conceptions, which some authors have formed of the person of Jesus Christ, have emboldened them to suppose, that the assertion of the manhood overrates the proof of the Godhead. Inferiority to the Father, confessed in any light, seems to startle many minds unaccustomed to the generous and extensive habits of thinking, in which the fathers excelled on this subject; while yet the answer is so easy to all supposed difficulties of this nature; "equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood."^a

CHAPTER XI.

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE WEST.

It is time to take up the connected thread of history again. But the reader

must not expect a successive detail of the proceedings of the Roman princes. After the death of Theodosius, the empire was torn by various convulsions, tending, in the West particularly, to its destruction. It is my duty to watch only the real Church amidst these scenes; for she lived while the secular glory of Rome was destroyed. Honorius, the son of Theodosius, reigned there, while his brother Arcadius governed at Constantinople.

Honorius, or to speak more properly, his ministers, (for he himself was, like Arcadius, a very feeble prince,) protected the external state of the church, and followed the steps of Theodosius in extirpating the remains of idolatry, and in supporting orthodoxy, against the Donatists, and all heretics. The superior advantages of a Christian above a Pagan establishment, even in times of such decline as the present were, appear in the humanity of a number of laws and edicts, by which idolatrous impurities and savage games were abolished, and due care was taken of the needy and the miserable. In what, for instance, but in a Christian government, shall we find so humane a law as that of Honorius, enacted in the year 400, by which judges are directed to take prisoners out of prison every Sunday, and to inquire if they be provided with necessities, and to see that they be properly accommodated in all things.

Humane
law of
Honorius,
A. D. 400.

In this reign, Rome was sacked by the Goths; and an opportunity was given for the exercise of many Christian virtues, by the sufferings to which its inhabitants were exposed. But enough has been said of this subject, in the review of Augustine's City of God.

Germanus, bishop of Auxerre, was one of the greatest ornaments of Gaul in this century. He was a person of quality, and exercised the profession of a counsellor in the former part of his life. Amateur,* his predecessor in the See, foresaw however, I apprehend, some symptoms of grace in him, and ordained him deacon. A month after the decease of

* He foresees these, by the observation which he made of the frame of his spirit, rather than by any special revelation. From various places in Fleury I have collected this short account of Germanus, and, stripping it of the marvellous, have retained only the credible.

Amator, he was unanimously elected bishop by the clergy, nobility, citizens, and peasants, and was forced to accept the office notwithstanding the great reluctance which he discovered. He employed himself in the foundation of monasteries, and in enriching the church, while he impoverished himself; and for thirty years, from his ordination to his death, he lived in extreme austerity.

About the year 430, that is, about the time of Augustine's death, he visited the island of Great Britain, with an intention to oppose Agricola, the son of a Pelagian bishop called Severinus, who propagated heresy among the churches there. Hence it is

Germanus
visits
Great
Britain,
A. D. 430.

probable, that Pelagius, after he had ceased to be famous in the world, had retired into his native country, and there died. It is no wonder that his opinions should there find abettors. Lupus, bishop of Troyes, accompanied Germanus in the mission, which was undertaken on the recommendation of a numerous council in Gaul. Lupus governed his church fifty-two years, and was highly renowned for sanctity. These two bishops, on their arrival, preached not only in the churches, but also in the highways, and in the open country, and vast crowds attended their ministry. The Pelagians came to a conference; the doctrines of grace were debated; the bishops, supporting themselves by express passages of Scripture in the hearing of all the people, were allowed to be victorious, and Pelagianism was reduced to silence. At this time, the Picts, a race of barbarians who inhabited the north, and the Saxons, a German nation, called in by the Britons, as it is well known, to assist them against the Picts, united their forces against the natives. The latter, terrified at the approach of the enemy, had recourse to Germanus and Lupus. Many, having been instructed by them, desired baptism; and a great part of the army received it at Easter, in a church which they made of boughs of trees twisted together. The festival being over, they marched against the enemy, with Germanus at their head. He, still remembering the profession in which he had spent great part of his youth, posted his men in a valley through which the enemy were to pass, surprised, and defeated them. After

these things the two bishops returned to the Continent. The deacon Palladius being ordained bishop of Scotland, arrived there in the year 431. Scotland had never before seen a bishop, and was in a state of extreme barbarism.

Palladius
ordained
bishop of
Scotland.

The same year died Paulinus of Nola, who had been bishop there twenty years. He was the intimate friend of Augustine, and appears through the mist of superstition which clouds his narrative, to have been one of the best Christians of the age. He was a mirror of piety, liberality and humility, worthy of a more intelligent age, and of more intelligent writers than those, who have recorded his life. For I choose to dismiss him with this general character, rather than to tarnish his memory with repeating the romances of those who meant to honour him.

Paulinus
bishop of
Nola dies
A. D. 431.

We have seen how the doctrines of grace were defended in Britain, and it is not to be doubted, but this was done with some saving efficacy. In Gaul, the doctrine of Semi-Pelagianism still maintained its ground, and Prosper and Hilary, who had written an account of it to Augustine, exerted themselves in defending the doctrines which he had taught. Celestine, of Rome, supported the same cause; and in the same year he published nine articles, which will deserve some consideration, as they show that the spark of truth was still alive amidst the mass of corruption in the Western Church, and still, under God, preserved some degree of Christian holiness. In these

IX Articles
of
Faith published
by
Celestine,
A. D. 341.

articles, it is owned that all men are, by nature, under the power of sin, by reason of the Fall, from which nothing but grace can deliver any man—that man is not good of himself; he needs a communication of God to him from God himself—nor can a man, though renewed, overcome the flesh and the devil, except he receive daily assistance—that God so worketh upon the hearts of men, that holy thoughts, pious intentions, and the least motion toward a good inclination, proceed from God. “We learn also, says Celestine, what we are to believe, from the prayers appointed by the Apostles through the world, and observed with uniformity through the whole church; wherein it is

* Beda, 1 Hist.

petitioned, that faith may be granted to infidels, idolaters, Jews, and heretics; charity to schismatics, repentance to sinners, and regeneration to catechumens. These prayers are not empty forms; their effects are visible in the conversion of many, for which thanks are returned to God. We must confess, that the grace of God prevents the merits of man; that it doth not take away free-will, but delivers, enlightens, rectifies, and heals it. God is willing, such is his goodness, that his gifts should be our merits, and grants an eternal reward to them: he works in us to will and to do according to his pleasure; but his gifts are not idle in us; we co-operate with his grace, and, if we find remission proceeding from our weakness, we immediately have recourse to him. As to the more difficult questions which have been discussed at large, we do not despise them, but need not treat of them. Suffice it that we have declared what we believe essential to the faith."*

Thus vigorously and perspicuously did a bishop of Rome maintain the apostolic doctrines, and so strong was the light which, in an age of superstition, had beamed forth from the writings of Augustine. I could not resist the pleasure of adding so valuable a testimony of the continuation of Christian Faith in the West.

Palladius, the pastor of Scotland, being dead, Celestine sent Patrick into the same parts in his stead. He was

The labours of Patrick.

born in Scotland,† at a place now called Donbarron. Having been carried captive into

Ireland, and having remained there a few years, in which time he learnt the language and customs of the country, he was by some pirates afterwards conveyed into Gaul; and after various adventures he returned a volunteer into Ireland, with a view to undertake the conversion of the barbarous natives, who seem, till this time, to have been without any acquaintance with Christianity. It is delightful to observe the motions of Providence, in causing the confusions of war and desolation to be subservient to the propagation of the Gospel. Patrick, intent only on the cause of Christ, amidst all the various scenes in which he was tossed to and fro, was not discouraged by the ill success which at first attended

his labours. The barbarous Irish refused to hear him, and he returned into Gaul, and spent some time with Germanus, of Auxerre, whose services in Britain have been mentioned. The conversation and example of Germanus inflamed his mind with fresh zeal, and by his advice he went to Rome; that he might be strengthened in his pious views by the authority of Celestine. From this bishop he received such support and assistance as enabled him to revisit Ireland; and at length his success was so great, that to this day he is looked on as the apostle of Ireland. He first taught the Irish the use of letters; and while we pass over in silence the fictions of which these ages are full, there is no reason to doubt but that he was the instrument of real good to the Irish, both with respect to this life and the next; nor ought such events to be omitted in the History of the Church of Christ. It were only to be wished, that we knew them more circumstantially. He died about the year 460, in an advanced age.

Patrick dies, A. D. 460.

In the mean time the clergy of Marseilles, who, in the latter times of the Pelagian controversy, with Cassian at their head, had endeavoured to chalk out a middle path between Augustine and Pelagius, propagated Semi-Pelagianism with success, notwithstanding the strenuous

Semi-Pelagianism supported by Cassian.

endeavours of Celestine of Rome. Nor ought we to be surprised at this: the doctrine of Semi-Pelagianism strongly recommends itself to the depraved taste of mankind; it divides the work of salvation between free grace and human ability in such a manner, that it both retains a specious appearance of humility toward God, and at the same time flatters the pride of man. Fallen creatures cannot but feel weakness and ignorance in some degree; and therefore they do not easily believe themselves perfectly sufficient for their own salvation; yet they love independence, and struggle to preserve it; and hence it is, that Semi-Pelagian nations are so peculiarly grateful to the nature of corrupt man. But it may be observed, that this very circumstance itself forms an insuperable objection to their truth. That can never be the wisdom of God in a mystery,* which

* Fleury, c. xii. 26. † Fleury, B. xvi. 13.

* 1 Cor. ii. 7.

men in their natural state so readily and cordially approve. Prosper still continued, with the arms of Scripture, to oppose the opinions of Cassian, and to defend the doctrines of the grace of God; Marius Mercator also laboured in the same cause. Gaul and the neighbouring countries no doubt received benefit from their endeavours. Semi-Pelagianism was so far checked, that during the dark ages after this time, the doctrines of grace were cordially received by godly persons, particularly in the monasteries. All, who were thoroughly humbled and contrite, found the comfort of them; while those monks, whose religion was pharisaic, found the Semi-Pelagian scheme to suit their self-righteous pride.* In this manner were religious men in the West divided: Cassian's authority prevailed the more, because of the serious and devout spirit which other parts of his writings possessed, or seemed to possess;† but, as the times grew more corrupt in practice, Semi-Pelagianism gained the ascendant.

About the year 439, Genserik, king of the Vandals, surprised Carthage‡ in the midst of peace, and used his victory with great cruelty. He himself was an Arian by profession, as the barbarous nations who had received Christianity generally were. How this happened, we have seen before. It does not appear that the Arians were altered in their dispositions. The same unprincipled wickedness, which had ever characterized that party, remained. Genserik showed the greatest malice against the clergy; drove a number of them from their churches, and martyred many. Indeed the abominations of the times seemed to

call for such a scourge. The light of divine grace revived in the West, purified many souls, and fitted them for sufferings; but with the majority, both superstition and practical wickedness increased. Carthage itself was sunk in vice; lewdness was amazingly predominant. So deplorable a thing is it for men to depart from the simplicity of Christian faith! The superstitious now increasing daily, only fortified them the more in self-righteousness; and natural depravity, while grace was neglected, grew to an enormous height. Oppression and cruelty domineered at Carthage; and the poor of the place, in the anguish of their misery, were induced to beseech God to deliver the city to the Barbarians.*

* The account of a council held at Braga, in Lusitania, will both illustrate the melancholy situation of civil affairs in this century for in the former part of it the council seems to have been held; and will also throw some light on the state of religion in Portugal, a country which has hitherto furnished us with no memoirs. The bishop Panceratius, being president, said, Ye see, brethren, the Council of havee made by the Barbarians: Braga. Brethren, let our care be for the salvation of souls, fearing lest the miseries of the times should seduce our flocks into the way of sinners; and therefore let us give them an example of suffering in our own persons for Jesus Christ, who suffered so much for us. And as some of the Barbarians are Arians, others idolaters, let us confess our faith. He then declared in few words the articles of Christian confession, to which they all assented. Elipand, of Coimbra, said, The Barbarians are among us; they besiege Lisbon, in a little time they will be upon us. Let every one go to his abode: let him comfort the faithful, decently conceal the bodies of the saints, and send us an account of the caves where they are deposited. All the bishops having approved of the motion: Panceratius added, Go home in peace, except brother Potamius, because his church at Emmom is destroyed, and his country ravaged. Potamius generously answered, I did not receive the episcopal function to sit at my ease, but to labour; let me comfort my flock, and suffer with them for Jesus Christ. You have well spoken, replied the president, God be with you. God maintain you in your resolution, and all the bishops. Let us depart with the peace of Jesus Christ.

At this council ten bishops subscribed to the decrees. Anshert of Porto, I suppose the present Oporto, wrote to a friend, a little after the council, in these affecting terms: I pity you, brother—may God look on our misery with the eyes of his mercy. Coimbra is taken, the servants of God are fallen by the edge of the sword. Elipand (one of the bishops of the council) is carried away captive: Lisbon has redeemed itself with gold. Igadita is besieged; nothing to be seen but

* Though this must have been the case for the most part, yet exceptions will occur in the course of this history. There were those whose hearts were better taught than their understandings.

† I speak ambiguously, because I have no access to Cassian, except indirectly by the short account of Du Pin. I scarcely need to say, after the accounts I have given of good men before his time, that notwithstanding the views of Prosper appear to me more humble, and holy, and consistently scriptural, yet there might be and there were real good men, on the Semi-Pelagian scheme: for it ought not to be confounded with Pelagianism itself: the theory of this excludes the very idea of grace.

‡ Victor Vitens, B. i.

† Fleury, B. xxiii. 6.

He who informs us of these things is Salvian, priest of Marseilles.* From him we learn, that many nominal Christians attended Pagan sacrifices, and afterwards went to the Lord's Supper. Lewdness was so common among them, that after the Vandals became masters of Carthage, they put a stop to the disorders, and obliged the prostitutes to marry. For these Barbarians had not yet attained the corrupt refinements of Roman luxury. Salvian very justly observes, that the miseries of these orthodox Christians ought to give no offence, because they were only Christians in name. They were in reality very idolatrous in their practices, and even amidst the horrors of war and public calamities, continued impure and voluptuous. And oppression and injustice were so grievous, that the dominion of the Barbarians was really more tolerable than that of the Romans. It was worth while to mention these things, as containing no improper illustration of the adorable justice of Providence, in punishing the wickedness of nominal Christians, not only at Carthage, but in general in this century through the Western empire. What happened to the ancient Jewish Church when grown wicked and idolatrous, and retaining only the form of religion, happens also to Christian nations. God is glorified by taking the power out of their hand, that they may no longer profane his holy name.

Genserik expelled the bishops from their Sees; and in case of any resistance, he made them slaves for life; and this punishment was actually inflicted on several bishops, and on many laymen of quality. Quod vult Deus, bishop of Carthage, and a number of clergy, were expelled, and they fled by sea to Naples. Others having suffered divers torments in Africa were put on board an old bark, and landed in Campania. Arian bishops were now put into possession of the va-

cant Sees.* Some bishops, who still remained in the provinces, presented themselves before Genserik, and entreated, that as they had lost their churches and their wealth, they might at least be allowed to remain without molestation in Africa, for the comfort and support of the people of God. "I have resolved to leave none of your name or nation," was the reply of the stern Barbarian; and it was with difficulty that he was withheld, by the entreaties of those about him, from ordering them to be thrown into the sea.

Yet, amidst the decline of Roman greatness, the growth of idolatrous superstition, and the horrors of the times, it is pleasing to see the improvements of human society through the influence of Christianity, corrupted and imperfect as it then was. I have before noticed the extinction of the savage games and sports of the Romans. Of a piece with this was the abolition of the barbarous custom of exposing children, a custom which had continued amidst all the grandeur of Rome. Constantine, in the year 331, had made a decree to obviate it; so had Honorius in the year 419. Still, however, those who took care of the children were molested. And now in the year 449, in a council held at Vaison,† it was ordained, that on Sunday the deacon shall give notice at the altar, that an exposed child hath been taken up, and that if any will claim it, he may do so within ten days; otherwise that he who shall afterwards claim such a child, shall have the church censure of Homicide denounced against him.

In the year 443, Genserik passed over into Sicily, and so far as his arms prevailed, extended the persecution of the church into that island.

Germanus, of Auxerre, was called a second time into Great Britain, to assist the church against the Pelagian heresy, which again spread itself there. He set out in the year 446, and battled the attempts of those who disturbed the faith of the Romans. The authority of this person was exceedingly great in these times, and it

Decreets
against the
custom of
exposing
children,
1st in 331.
2dly in
412. 3dly
in 442.

Genserik
persecutes
the church
in Sicily.
A. D. 443.

Germanus
of Aux-
erre sup-
ports the
church in
Great Bri-

ministry, growing and anguish. You have seen what the Sabea have done in Galilee; judge what the Abissinians are doing in Livonia. I send you the decrees of the faith you ask for: I will send you all, if I discover the place where you are hidden. I expect the same fate daily. The Lord have mercy on us.

The sympathizing reader, who enjoys at his ease the civil and religious privileges of our country, will do well to consider how thankful he ought to be for blessings, of which these pious men were deprived.

* Salvian de Gubern. B. 7.

* Victor Vitens, B. I.

† Fleury, B. xvi. 52.

tain a-
gainst the
Pelagians.

Christian doctrine, and the benefit of human society. But I am inclined neither to credit nor to relate his miracles; and I am sorry that I have little else to

Germanus
dies.

A. D. 448.

must be confessed that he employed it to the best purposes, the propagation of religion, supported by any tolerable decorum of manners, must ever maintain over ignorant barbarism, that his respect for it, in some measure, had already checked his progress in Gaul; and an embassy of Leo, bishop of Rome, from the emperor of the West, determined him not to invade Italy. This was in the year 452. Two years after, Genseric, king of the Vandals, arrived at Rome, which he found without defence: Leo went out to meet him, and persuaded him to be content with the pillage, and to abstain from burnings and murders. He returned into Africa with many thousand captives. This circumstance gave occasion to an exercise of the Christian grace of charity, worthy to have a place in these annals.

Attila, the Hun, now made terrible ravages in various parts of the empire; yet, such is the ascendant which religion, supported by any tolerable decorum of manners, must ever maintain over ignorant barbarism, that his respect for it, in some measure, had already checked his progress in Gaul; and an embassy of Leo, bishop of Rome, from the emperor of the West, determined him not to invade Italy. This was in the year 452. Two years after, Genseric, king of the Vandals, arrived at Rome, which he found without defence: Leo went out to meet him, and persuaded him to be content with the pillage, and to abstain from burnings and murders. He returned into Africa with many thousand captives. This circumstance gave occasion to an exercise of the Christian grace of charity, worthy to have a place in these annals.

After a long vacancy, Deogratias was ordained bishop of Carthage in the year 454. at the desire of Valentinian, the Roman emperor, and as it seems by the connivance at least of Genseric. The captives of the latter were divided among his followers, who separated husbands from wives, and children from parents. The heart of Deogratias was moved with compassion; and to prevent these disorders, he undertook to redeem the captives by the sale of all the vessels of gold and silver belonging to the churches. As there were no places large enough to contain the multitude,* he placed them in two great churches, which he furnished with beds and straw, giving order for their daily accommodation with all necessaries. He appointed physicians to attend the sick, and had nourishment distributed to them in his presence by their directions. In the night he visited all the beds, giving himself up to this work, notwithstanding his age and

infirmities. He lived only three years in his bishopric, was endeared to the memory of the faithful by his virtues; and while Arians performed military exploits, and dealt in blood, this follower of Augustine honoured the real doctrines of the Gospel by acts of meekness and charity. It is thus that we still trace the real church of Christ, and see the connexion of principles and practice in the disciples of the Lamb. The sight of so much goodness was too much for Genseric; he took care to suffer no more such bishops, and, in process of time, the orthodox bishops in Africa were reduced to three.

Several godly persons, after a variety of hardships and tortures, came into the hands of Capsur, a Moorish king, the relation of Genseric. These being arrived at the desert where he lived, and seeing there a number of profane sacrifices, began by their discourse and manner of life to bring over the Barbarians to the knowledge of God, and gained a great multitude in a country where the name of Jesus had not yet been heard of. Desirous of establishing the Gospel there, they sent deputies, who having crossed the desert, arrived at a Roman city; for some part of Africa still remained connected with the Roman empire. The bishop sent priests and ministers, who built a church, and baptized a great number of Barbarians. The Pagan king informed Genseric of these transactions, who, incensed at the zeal of these pious men, condemned them to death. The converted Moors bewailed themselves; and the martyrs as they passed by, said to each of them, Brother, pray for me; God has accomplished my desire; this is the way to the heavenly kingdom.

Genseric ordered the bishops to deliver up the sacred vessels and books; which they refusing, the Vandals took them by force, and plundered every thing. Valerian, bishop of Abbenza, above four-score years of age, was driven alone out of the city, and all person were prohibited from lodging him in their houses. He lay naked a long time in the public road, exposed to the weather, and thus expired for the faith of Christ.

The Orthodox celebrating Easter in the church of a town called Regia, the Arians assaulted and massacred them. Genseric ordered, that none but Arians should serve in his family, or in that of his children. A person named Armogastus, in the service of Theodoric, the king's son,

* Viet. Vit. B. i.

was treated with a variety of insults, till death put a period to his sufferings.

Another, named Archimimus, was flattered by Genseric himself, and was promised immense wealth, if he would receive Arianism; but his constancy was inviolable, and Genseric having given secret orders to the executioners, that if he showed undaunted courage at the moment of execution, his life should be spared; he by this means was suffered to live.

Satur, steward of Huneric's house,* was very free in his censures of Arianism. Being accused, he was threatened with the loss of all his property, and was further told, that his wife should be married to a keeper of camels if he persevered. His wife, who had several children and a suckling infant, entreated him to comply. He answered, "Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh.† Let them do what they will, I must remember the words of the Lord, Whoever doth not leave wife, or children, or lands, or houses, cannot be my disciple." They stripped him of all, and reduced him to beggary.

Genseric afterwards ordered the great church of Carthage to be shut up, and banished the ministers; and wherever his arms prevailed, he made the people of God to feel his fury. The whole empire

of the West, indeed, was falling into ruin. Odoacer, king of the Heruli, made himself master of Rome in the year 476, and though he was

Rome taken by Odoacer, A. D. 476.

afterwards obliged to give way to the victorious arms of Theodoric the Goth, yet Roman emperors have ceased in Italy ever since.‡ Africa, we have seen, bowed under the yoke of the Vandals; Spain, and a great part of Gaul was held in subjection by the Goths; the other part of Gaul, was subjugated by the Franks, who, in process of time, became masters of the whole country, which from them bears the name of France; and the southern part of Great Britain was overpowered at length by the Saxons. These were idolaters, and the small remains of the ancient Britons, Christians by profession,

retired into the inaccessible mountains of Wales. The poverty of the northern parts of the island was their security. And we must be content to leave the fruits of the labours of Germanus, Palladius, and Patrick, in a very low state, till we shall have occasion to speak of the conversion of the Saxons. The Franks also were at present idolaters; the Barbarians, who ruled in the other parts, were Arians, though it does not appear that any of them persecuted the faithful with so much rage as the Vandals did. Evaric, king of the Goths in Spain, seemed ambitious to tread in the steps of Genseric: he forbade the ordination of bishops in the room of those who were deceased, and sent others into banishment. The churches fell into decay, and congregations seldom assembled. Indeed it was a very gloomy season with the Western church in general. The wrath of God was evidently poured out on the churches for mercies long abused; but there were those who, by the principles of divine grace, were enabled in patience to possess their souls, and to evidence that the real church was far from being extinguished.

Among the stars that illuminated this disastrous period, was Sidonius of Lyons.* He was one of the noblest families in Gaul, and was a celebrated

orator and poet. About the year 473, he was, contrary to his wishes, appointed bishop of Clermont, in Auvergne. His liberality was highly

Sidonius of Lyons made bishop of Clermont, A. D. 472.

laudable, and even before he was bishop, he did frequently, unknown to his wife, convert his silver plate to the use of the poor. His brother-in-law,† Ecdicius, was remarkably distinguished for the same virtue. The Goths having ravaged the country during the scarcity occasioned by a grievous famine, which was added to the national afflictions, Ecdicius collected 4,000 of both sexes, whom he lodged in his houses, and nourished during all the time of the scarcity. Patiens, bishop of Lyons, also extended his bounty to the remotest parts of Gaul. The

The bounty of Patiens,

* Huneric was the son and successor of Genseric.

† Job ii. 10.

‡ I have not thought it worth while to mention particularly the emperors of the West since the death of the great Theodosius, as they are all characters very feeble or obscure, and no way interesting in church-history.

* I dare not, however, rank this man among the ornaments of the Church of Christ. I find him continually with princes and emperors, writing their panegyrics, and absorbed in secular politics. Of his evangelical taste and spirit, I know no sufficient evidence.

† Fleury, B. xlix. 36.

bishop of
Lyons.

providence of God was remarkable in tempering the miseries of the Christians, in these times, by raising up such exemplars of munificence. Patiens possessed the pastoral character in a great degree, and reclaimed many of the Burgundian Arians. His virtues were admired by Gondobaud, the Burgundian King, who resided at Lyons.

A council was held in Gaul; from the confused accounts of which it appears that Semi-Pelagianism was still very prevalent there; nor is it to be wondered at, if we consider the little light of the Scriptures which now remained in the church.

Genserich dying in the year 477, was succeeded by his eldest son Huneric.*

He began his reign with a mild aspect toward the faithful, and, after an interval of twenty-four years, permitted them to ordain a bishop of Carthage,

but under this condition, that the Arians at Constantinople should have the same liberty, which those of the general church had at Carthage. The people protested against the condition, and with good reason, because the power was out of their hands, and they said, "We will not accept a bishop on such terms. Jesus Christ will govern the church, as he has done hitherto." But Huneric disregarded the protestation: and Eugenius was elected bishop of Carthage.

All mankind soon bore witness to his virtues. The revenues of the church were indeed in the hands of the Arians;

but large sums were every day brought to him, all which he faithfully distributed to the needy, and reserved to himself no more than daily bread. The Arian bishops

soon murmured; they represented him as a dangerous preacher, and expostulated with Eugenius himself for suffering persons to hear him who wore the Vandal habit, which was, it seems, at that time perfectly distinct from the Roman. God's house, he replied, is open to all, without respect to persons.

Huneric, who had only complied thus far with the inclinations of the Roman Christians in his dominions, to oblige the court of Constantinople, where the emperor of the East reigned, began gra-

dually to show the ferocity of his spirit. Fearing that he should lose his Vandals, if they attended the preaching of Eugenius, he ordered guards to watch at the door of the church, who, when they saw a man or woman in a Vandal habit, struck such persons on the head with short staves jagged and indented, which, being twisted into the hair, and drawn back with sudden violence, tore off both the hair and skin.* Many suffered extremely by these means: women, who had been thus treated, were led through the streets, with a crier going before, to exhibit them to the people. The faithful, however, remained firm; and those who belonged to Huneric's court could not be induced to receive Arianism. He deprived them of their pensions, and sent them to reap corn in the country. As these persons had been educated like gentlemen, the punishment was equally severe and reproachful. But they bore the cross for the sake of Him who gave himself for them.

Victor, bishop of Vita, to whom, as an eye-witness and fellow-sufferer, we are indebted for the history of this memorable persecution, relates some visions, which were looked on as preludes of the horrible desolations which approached. We may pass by these without any loss to the reader, and also without any impeachment of the general credulity of the historian. Huneric at first ordered, that none should hold any office who was not an Arian. He afterwards confiscated the possessions of the rejected orthodox, and banished their persons into Sicily and Sardinia. He seized the consecrated virgins, and treated them with excessive cruelty and indecency, with a view to extort evidence from them against the bishops. But nothing could be drawn from them to suit the tyrant's purpose, though many died under the torments.

Huneric afterwards banished pastors and people, to the amount of four thousand nine hundred and seventy-six, into the desert. Felix, of Abbirita, had been bishop forty-four years, and by the palsy had lost his speech, and even his under-

standing. The faithful, compassionating his case, implored the king, that the old man might be allowed to end his days quietly at Carthage. Huneric, as if he had been ambitious to outstrip the Pagan

Persecu-
tions of
Huneric.

* Victor Vit. B. ii.

* Fleury, B. xxx.

emperors in persecution, said, "Let him be tied to wild oxen, and be so carried, where I ordered;" on which, they tied him across a mule like a piece of timber. These Christian heroes were conducted to the two cities of Sicca and Laras, where the Moors were directed to receive and conduct them into the desert. They were at first confined in a prison, where their brethren were allowed to have access to them, to preach, and to administer the Lord's Supper. Some young children were of the number, several of whom were tempted by their mothers, to admit Arian baptism; but out of the mouths of babes and sucklings strength was obtained, and they continued faithful.

The guards were soon after severely chastised for granting these privileges; none were permitted to visit the prisoners; they were thrown one upon another, and, for want of room, could not withdraw, to supply with the necessities of nature. The effect of this was horrible beyond description. Some of their brethren found means to enter unobserved among them, and of these was Victor, our author, who sunk up to the knees in the mire. How strong was that grace which caused them patiently to endure, rather than free themselves by unfaithfulness!

The Moors at length ordered them to march. They went out on the Lord's day, their clothes, their heads, and their faces covered all over with filth, and they sang as they went, "Such honour have all his saints." Cyprina, bishop of Lucania, comforted them, and gave them all he had, wishing for the honour of being carried with them. This was not granted him at present. He afterwards was confined, suffered much, and was sent into banishment. There is a voice in man which speaks loudly in favour of suffering innocency. The whole country resounded with the cries and groans of the people, flocking to behold them, and throwing their children at their feet. Alas, said they, to whom do you leave us? Who shall baptize these children? Who shall administer the Lord's supper to us? Why are we not permitted to go with you? Among the rest, a woman was observed leading a child by the hand. Run, my boy, said she, observe what haste these holy men make to receive the crown. Being reproved for desiring to go along with them, she replied, I am the daughter of the late bishop of Zurita; and I am carrying this child, who is my grandson,

lest he be left alone, and the enemy draw him into the snares of death. The bishops, with tears in their eyes, could only say, God's will be done. As they travelled, when the aged or the young, who wanted strength, were not able to advance, the Moors pricked them forward with their javelins, or threw stones at them. Such as were not able to walk were tied by the feet, and dragged along. Many died in the march; the rest arrived at the desert, and were fed with barley, nor were even allowed this after a season.

In the year 483, Huneric sent an edict to Eugenius, with orders to read it in the church, and dispatched couriers with copies of it through Africa. The purport of the Edict was, after upbraiding the faithful bishops for their zeal in spreading their doctrines, to command them all to appear at Carthage, to dispute with the Arian bishops on a certain day, and to prove their faith, if they could, by the Scripture.

The most alarming words were, "resolving not to suffer any scandal in our provinces." The bishops interpreted them to mean, that he would not suffer any who professed the doctrine of the Trinity to remain in his dominions. They therefore drew up a remonstrance, containing in substance a petition, that Huneric would send for the bishops who were beyond the seas. Huneric, regardless of the remonstrance, persecuted the most learned bishops under various pretences. He banished the bishop Donatian, after giving him a hundred and fifty bastinadoes. He treated others also with great cruelty, and forbade any of his sect to eat with the faithful.

On the first of February, the day appointed for the conference, the bishops resorted to Carthage from every part of Africa, and from all the islands subject to the Vandals. Huneric, for many days, made no mention of the conference, and separated those of the greatest abilities from the rest, that he might put them to death on false pretences. One of the most learned, named Letus, he burned alive, with a view of intimidating others. At length, when the conference was opened, the orthodox chose ten of their own number, to answer for the rest. Cirila, the chief of the Arian bishops, was seated on a magnificent throne, with

Edict of
Huneric,
A. D. 483.

Huneric
banishes
Donatian.

his partisans sitting in an exalted station, while the orthodox continued standing below. The latter saw what a mock-conference it was likely to prove, and remonstrated; the Arians ordered one hundred bastinadoes to be given to each of them. May God look down on the violence that is offered us, said Eugenius. Cirila finding them better prepared than he imagined, made use of several evils to avoid the conference. The orthodox foreseeing this, had prepared a confession* of faith, in which the Trinitarian doctrine is very explicitly declared, and which concludes thus: "This is our faith, supported by the authority of the evangelists and apostles, and founded upon the society of all the general churches through the world; in which by the grace of God Almighty, we hope to persevere till death."

The Arians, incensed at this confession, reported to the king that the orthodox had raised a clamour, to avoid the conference. The tyrant had taken his measures; orders were sent through the provinces, by virtue of which the churches were all shut in one day, and their revenues given to the Arians. He allowed the orthodox till the first of June in the same year, that is, 484, to consider whether they would merit pardon by a retraction.

Such were the measures made use of to obliterate the doctrines of divine grace in Africa, where they had been so gloriously revived by Augustine.

Cruelties of Huneric.

Huneric ordered the bishops to be expelled from Carthage, stripped them of horses and changes of raiment, and forbade, under terrible penalties, any one to give them victuals or lodgings. The bishops remained without the walls of the city, exposed to the weather; and meeting accidentally with the king, they all came to him: "Why, say they, are we treated thus?" He looked with fury, and ordered some armed horsemen to ride in among them, who wounded many.

Huneric could not but be conscious that his conduct was no less absurd than iniquitous. On second thoughts, he ordered them to go to a place called the Temple of Memory, where they were shown a paper rolled up, and were required to swear to what was contained in it. Are we like beasts, void of sense and under-

standing, cried two of them, that we should swear at a venture, without knowing what is contained in the paper? In the issue, of four hundred and forty-six bishops, who came to the conference, forty-eight died, many of them, probably, through hard usage; forty-six were banished into Corsica, three hundred and two into other places; and most of the rest made their escape.

Among those sent into exile was Vigilus, of Thapsus, a man famous for his writings. To prevent the persecution from being more fierce, he composed a number of treatises under the names of some of the most renowned fathers, as he himself acknowledged with regard to several of them. The celebrated creed, called that of Athanasius, is ascribed to him.* He appears to have meant well; but the artifice was extremely culpable; and partly by his practice, and partly by his example, he has caused much confusion and uncertainty in the works of the fathers. Vigilus himself retired to Constantinople.

Huneric, as if the very soul of Galerius had been assumed by him, pursued his sanguinary designs with vigour. He sent executioners among the laity, who whipped, hanged, and burned alive the faithful. Eugenius, before he left Carthage, had written a strenuous letter, to warn his flock: and it must be owned that many of them gave the noblest proofs of sincerity. Donsia, while she was scourged, and the blood was streaming from her body, said, "Ministers of the devil, what you now do to confound me with shame (for they had stripped her naked), is my glory;" and she exhorted the rest to suffer martyrdom. Looking severely at her son, whom she saw dreading the torture, "Remember, son, said she, that we have been baptized in the name of the Trinity. Let us not lose the garment of salvation, lest the Master should say, Cast them into outer darkness." The young man upon this suffered death with constancy: and she thanked God with a loud voice,

Further cruelties of Huneric.

* I have wondered why persons, who love not the doctrine of the Trinity, should triumph so much on account of this circumstance. If the sentiments of the creed be defensible by Scripture, the name of Vigilus cannot disgrace them; if they be not, that of Athanasius can do them no honour.

embracing his body. Many suffered with her, strengthened by her exhortations.*

The sufferings of many others were very dreadful; it is even painful to write or read the narratives. A woman called *Victoria*, with amazing constancy supported her cruel tortures, unmoved also by the entreaties of her husband, who brought her to pity their common children.

Victorian, of *Adrumetum*, was at that time governor of *Carthage* under the king. He was the wealthiest man in *Africa*: to gain him over to *Arianism* was to gain a prize; and *Huneric* assured him of his particular favour, if he would submit to be re-baptized, and renounce the *Trinitarian* creed. "Tell the king," said he, "if there were no other life after this, I would not for a little temporal honour be ungrateful to my God, who hath granted me the grace to believe in him." The king, incensed at an answer truly christian, tormented him grievously; and thus he slept in *Jesus*. At *Tambania*, two brothers continued a whole day suspended, with large stones fastened to their feet. One of them, overcome with the torture, at length desired to recant, and to be taken down. "No, no, said the other; this, brother, is not what we swore to *Jesus Christ*: I will testify against you, when we come before his awful throne, that we swore by his body and blood, that we would suffer for his sake." He said much more, to rouse and encourage him; at length his fellow-sufferer cried out, "Tearment as you please, I will follow my brother's example." The executioners were quite fatigued with torturing them by hot irons and hooks, and at length dismissed them, remarking that every one appeared ready to follow the example of the two brothers, and that none was brought over to *Arianism*.—I see still the marks of the true church patiently enduring for the truth's sake, and victorious in suffering.

At *Typasa*, the secretary of *Cirila* was ordained bishop by the *Arians*. The inhabitants seeing this, transported themselves into *Spain*, as the distance was but small; some, who could meet with no vessels, remained in *Africa*. The new bishop laboured by courtesy to win their favour; but they, in contempt of his ministry, assembled themselves in a private house for public worship. *Huneric*

hearing of this by a message from the bishop, ordered their tongues to be cut out and their right hands to be cut off, in the public market-place. He seems to have permitted them to retire to *Constantinople*, but to have been determined to prevent their open confession of the *Trinity*. Shall I, in compliance with modern prejudices, throw a veil over the rest, or shall I proceed according to historical veracity!—*IMPERIOSA TRAHIT VERITAS*. A miracle followed, worthy of God, whose majesty had been so daringly insulted, and which must at that time have much strengthened the hearts

A miraculous interposition.

of the faithful, who needed indeed some peculiar consolations amidst such scenes of horrible persecution. The miracle itself is so well attested, that I see not how it can be more so. The reader shall have both the fact and its proofs. Though their tongues were cut out to the root, they spake as well as before. "If any one doubt the fact, says *Victor of Vita*, let him go to *Constantinople*, where he will find a sub-deacon, called *REPARATUS*, one who was thus treated, who speaks plainly, and who has a particular respect shown him in the palace of the emperor *Zeno*, especially by the empress."

Encas, of *Gaza*, a Platonic philosopher, a cautious and prudent person,* was at that time at *Constantinople*, and writes thus in the conclusion of his *Dialogue on the Resurrection*; "I myself saw them, heard them speak, and wondered, that their utterance could be so articulate. I searched for the organ of speech, and not trusting my ears, was resolved to have the proof of the eyes. Causing them to open their mouths, I saw that their tongues were plucked out even by the roots, and was then more surprised, that they could live, than that they could speak." Is this sufficient evidence! Hear more: *Procopius*, the historian, in his *History of the Vandalic War*,† says, *Huneric* ordered the tongues of many to be cut out, who were

Proofs of the miraculous interposition.

* *Gibbon* (*Decline of Rom. Emp.* vol. iii. c. xxxviii.) is struck with this evidence, in contrast with that of the rest. Yet he intimates that the infidel's suspicion is measurable. Does he allude to himself? To what purpose does he say so, if he does not? If he does, what is this but to deny all reasonable evidence, and confess himself to be unreasonable?

† *B. l. c. viii.*

* *Victor*, *B. v.*

afterwards seen in the streets of Constantinople when I was there, talking without any impediment, or feeling any inconvenience from what they had suffered. Count Marcellinus, in his *Chronicon*, says, "I have seen some of this company of faithful confessors at Constantinople, who had their tongues cut out, but spake nevertheless without any imperfection in their utterance." To name only one more witness: the great emperor Justinian, in a Constitution published by him for Africa, after it had fallen into his dominion, testifies, that he had beheld the same.*

Numbers were maimed in various ways. Some lost their hands, some their feet, others their eyes, their noses, or their ears. Dagila, wife of one of the King's cup-bearers, though nobly born and brought up tenderly, was severely scourged and banished into a desert, joyfully forsaking her house, husband, and children.

Seven monks of Capsa having been persuaded to come to Carthage, flattered with fair promises and the royal favour, showed, however, that they had another spirit in them. Inflexibly firm in the profession of the Trinity, and disappointing the hopes of Huneric, they were martyred by his orders.

The whole clergy of Carthage, after having been almost starved with hunger, were exiled. Elpidiphorus, who had been baptized into the faith of the Trinity, and who had had for his sponsor the deacon Muritta, was more active than others in tormenting the faithful. As they were preparing to stretch Muritta on the rack, the venerable aged person suddenly drew out, from under his robe, the linen with which he had covered Elpidiphorus at his coming out of the font, and spreading it in the view of the whole company, he said to the apostate, who sat as his judge, "Behold the linen which shall accuse you at the coming of the great Judge, and shall cast you headlong into the lake of brimstone, because you have clothed yourself with cursing, by renouncing the true baptism and the faith." Elpidiphorus was confounded, and unable to answer. Two Vandals, who loved the faith, accompanied by their mother, forsook their wealth, and followed the clergy into banishment. Theucarius, an apostate, advised the Arian governors to recall some

of the young children, whom he, according to his office, had taught to sing the service of the church, and whom he knew to have the best voices. Messengers were sent to recall twelve, who, weeping and holding the banished clergy by their knees, refused to leave them. They were separated from them by force, and were brought back to Carthage. But neither flatteries nor the bastinado could cure them of their attachment. These, after the persecution was over, were held in high estimation in the church. The Arian bishops went every where armed with swords, accompanied by their clergy. One, named Anthony, distinguished himself by his cruel treatment of Eugenius of Carthage, who was his prisoner, and whose life he in vain attempted to destroy by repeated severities. Another bishop, called Habet Deum, was bound by him hand and foot. Another, stopping his mouth, poured water on his body. "My brother," said the Arian, unbinding him, "you are now a Christian as well as we; what should hinder you in future, from obeying the will of the king?" "While you were stopping my mouth, I made," said the holy confessor, "a protestation against your violence, which the angels have written down, and will present to God."

The barbarity was general: persons were stopped on the highways, and brought to Arian bishops, who rebaptized them, and gave them certificates, to prevent their suffering the same violence again. None were permitted to pass from place to place without these certificates. The Arian clergy went, even in the night time, with armed men into houses, carrying water with them, with which they sprinkled persons in their beds, crying out that they had made them Christians. They put the physician Liberatus, and his wife, into separate prisons; when somebody informed the latter, that her husband had obeyed the king, "Let me see him," says she, "and I will do what is well-pleasing to God." They took her out of the prison to her husband, to whom she said, taking him by the throat, "Unhappy man, unworthy of the grace of God, why will you perish eternally for a transitory glory? Will your gold and silver deliver you from hell-fire?" "What is the matter, wife," he replied; "what have they been telling you? I am what I was by the grace of Jesus Christ, and will never renounce the faith."

* B. I. Cod. de Off. Afr.

Cresconius, a presbyter of the city of Myzenta, was found dead in a cavern of Mount Zena. Various persons of both sexes fleeing from the persecution, suffered thus through cold and hunger.

At length, after a horrible reign of seven years and ten months, in which time the church was purged by as severe a persecution as any ever known, in the year 465 died the tyrant Huneric of a disease, in which he was corroded by worms,—a signal monument of Divine justice! Gontamond, his nephew and successor, stopped the persecution, and recalled Eugenius to Carthage. In the year 487, a council was held at Rome, with Felix, the bishop, at its head,* in which were forty bishops of Italy, four of Africa, and seventy-six priests. The rules of penance, prescribed by this synod, on occasion of the late persecution, partook partly of the prevailing superstitions, and partly of the primitive strictness of discipline. Clergymen, who had suffered themselves to be re-baptized, were deprived not only of the ministry, but even of lay-communion, till their death. Other articles breathe the same severe spirit; yet I rejoice, amidst the excess of discipline, to find, that real religion was honoured. One rule of the council deserves to be mentioned for its good sense: "No clergyman shall receive into his city the penitent of another bishop, without his certificate in writing."

In the year 493, Theoderic, the Ostrogoth, now complete master of Italy, after he had ruined Odovacer, made a law to restrain all the adherents of the latter from making a will, or disposing of their estates. All Italy was alarmed, and Epiphanius, bishop of Pavia, was applied to, that he might intercede with the king. Lawrence, bishop of Milan, joining with him, they went together to Ravenna, where Theoderic resided.† Epiphanius obtained favour for all, except some few leaders of the party. Theoderic, who had before honoured and experienced the virtues of Epiphanius, discoursed with him in private, and said, "You see the desolations of Italy; the Burgundians have carried away captive a number of the inhabitants; I wish to redeem them; none of the bishops is so pro-

per as yourself, undertake the embassy; I shall order what money is necessary for you."

Epiphanius accepted the commission on condition that Victor, bishop of Turin, might be his companion. In the year 494, Epiphanius passed the Alps; all the people came out to see him, and brought presents, which he distributed among the poor. Arriving at Lyons, where Gondebaud, the Burgundian king, resided, he advised him to dismiss the captives without ransom. It seems astonishing, that one Arian king should negotiate with another of the same sect, by means of a Trinitarian; but it is just to notice these things, that the reader may not suspect all Arians to have had the spirit of Eusebius, of Nicomedia, or of Huneric the Vandal. The true triumphs of real godliness and virtue, in softening the miseries of human society, appear in these transactions of Epiphanius. Let philosophers say that this was all the effect of superstition: it is my duty to show, that even in a superstitious age, godliness did exist, and did perform what mere superstition could not; and Philosophy should stop her mouth, when it is remembered, that she seldom ever did so much good to society, as the Christian religion did, even when discoloured by superstition.

Gondebaud, who was no stranger to the character of Epiphanius, restored to him without ransom all the prisoners, except those who were taken armed, they being the property of the captors. Six thousand were sent away without ransom; and Theoderic's money, aided by the liberality of Syagria, a lady of quality and of good works, and of Avitua, bishop of Vienne, redeemed the rest. Epiphanius travelled to Geneva, to obtain the release of the captives there, and was equally successful with Gondegislaus, the brother of Gondebaud. He returned into Italy with troops of redeemed captives, and easily obtained for them from Theoderic the recovery of their lands.

This excellent person was born at Pavia in the year 438. From early life he was devoted to divine services, and at twenty years of age, was ordained deacon. He was made bishop at the age of twenty-eight; and it must be confessed that he

Epiphanius and Victor commissioned to redeem the captives in Burgundy, A. D. 494.

Epiphanius was born at Pavia, A. D. 438.

* Ep. 7. Felix.
Vol. I.

† Ennodius Vita. Epiph.
2 R

gave himself wholly to the service of God and the good of mankind. He was often successfully employed in public affairs. In the year 471, he had been sent by Nepos, at that time emperor of the West, to Evaric, king of the Visigoths, then residing at Toulouse, though after the Visigoths were ejected from Gaul, they resided in Spain. Epiphanius negotiated a peace with Evaric successfully, but refused an invitation to dine with him, because he was an Arian. In 476, Odoacer, making himself master of Italy, Epiphanius, by his intercession, obtained the deliverance of a number of captives; and with no other fund, than the supplies of Providence, he repaired the city of Pavia, which had been pillaged, and rebuilt the churches. When Theodoric entered Italy in 489, Epiphanius came to him to Milan, and was courteously received. He still softened the horrors of war during the contest between Odoacer and Theodoric, and did good to all, even He died, supporting those who had pillaged his lands. In the A. D. 496. year 496 he died, being fifty-eight years of age.

About this time decretals of Gelasius, bishop of Rome, were published: a few of them relating to ordination* will deserve to be mentioned. "He who is taken from a monastic life, may be ordained priest in a year's time; but he must not be illiterate; he who cannot read, can only be a door-keeper. All laymen that shall be ordained shall have six months probation; and cannot be admitted priests till after eighteen months. Bishops are forbidden to receive, much less to promote, such clergymen as pass from one church to another."

Gelasius† himself seems to have been an ornament to Christianity. He died in the year 496. He composed a treatise against some Romans, who had a desire to re-establish the ancient superstition of the Lupercalia.‡ "I forbid,

says he, any Christian to practise these superstitions: leave them to heathens. I think it my duty to declare to Christians, that they are fatal. I doubt not but my predecessors solicited the emperors to abolish this abuse; they were not heard, and this ruined the empire."—It appears hence how slowly and stubbornly the old idolatries departed out of Christendom. The testimony of Gelasius deserves our attention, because his manners were holy. He was incessantly employed in prayer, reading, writing or business, and in conversation on spiritual things with godly men. Idleness and luxury were equally avoided by him; negligence in a bishop he esteemed dangerous to souls; and his liberality to the poor was unbounded. To all this, it may not be quite insignificant to add, that he composed hymns after the manner of Ambrose.

About the year 496, Clovis, king of the the Franks, was baptized, and received into the general church. He himself, perfidious, ambitious, and cruel, was no honour to any religious denomination. Clovis baptized, A. D. 496.

But some remarkable circumstances of Providence attended his reception of Christianity; which will therefore deserve a place in these memoirs. The Franks, or French, were a German nation known long before; who dwelt about the lower Rhine. Having passed this river, they entered into Gaul, under the conduct of Pharamond, their first king, about the year 420. Clodio, Meroveus, Childeric, and Clovis, reigned in succession after him. Like the rest of the barbarous nations, who desolated the lower empire, they still advanced gradually in conquests, and Clovis ruined the Roman power entirely in Gaul. But he had to contend with other barbarous invaders, all of whom, however, he subdued at length, and by much carnage and violence he became the founder of

ther to explain the indecencies of the ceremonies; suffice it to say, that the whole was calculated to encourage libidinous vices—I would ask such a writer, whether those, who were for still preserving this abomination, could be any more than nominal Christians; whether he knows any evil more severely and more constantly condemned in Scripture than idolatry; and, lastly, whether the expression "harmless festival," (it is Gibbon's) does not fasten on him, who uses it, the charge of impudence, or ignorance of Scripture, or malevolence against the word of God.

* Fleury, B. xxx. Sec. 34.

† Fleury, B. xxx. 41.

‡ Gibbon, in Vol. iii. c. xxxvi. Decline, &c. is pleased to accuse Gelasius of absurd prejudice, because he supposed those who were for still preserving the festival of the Lupercalia to be only nominal Christians. After having told the less learned reader, that this festival was an ancient piece of idolatry, in honour of the idol god Pan; that young men, and even magistrates ran naked through the streets; that they—modesty forbids me fur-

the French monarchy. Wicked as he was, he was fitted to become an useful instrument of Providence, like Henry VIII. of England, many ages after. He had married Clotilda, niece of Gundobad, king of the Burgundians; she was zealous for the doctrine of the Trinity, though both her uncle and the whole nation of the Burgundians professed Arianism. Could her private history be known, it would probably be instructive and edifying. For what else could induce a royal lady, brought up among heretics, and given in marriage to a powerful Pagan, to persevere alone so firmly in the apostolical faith, but the grace of God and the effectual operation of his Spirit, in an age when divine truth had scarce a single patron of great power in Europe!*

Having a son by her husband Clovis, she endeavoured to persuade him, to permit the child to be baptized, and earnestly reasoned with him on the vanity of his idols, and preached Christianity to him with much sincerity. Clovis, who, it seems, had great affection for his queen, consented at length to the baptism of the infant; but he died a few days after. Clovis in a rage declared, "I have lost my child, because he has been devoted to your detest; had he been devoted to mine, he would have lived." The pious queen answered, "I thank God, who has thought me worthy to bear a child, whom he has called into his kingdom." She had afterwards another son, who was baptized by the name of Clothemer. On his falling sick the king said, "Yes, I see he will die like his brother, because he has been baptized in the name of your Christ." The mother prayed for his recovery, and the child was restored to health. Clotilda persevering in her exhortations, Clovis heard them, patient, but still inflexible. It pleased God at length to give him a striking lesson, from which he ought to have learned the true art of happiness. Fighting with the Alemanni, he was upon the point of being entirely defeated. Finding himself in the utmost danger, he lifted up his eyes to heaven with tears, and said, "O Jesus Christ! whom Clotilda affirms to be the Son of the living God, I implore thy aid. If thou givest me victory, I will believe and be baptized; for I have called upon my own gods in vain."—

While he was speaking, the Alemanni turned their backs, and began to flee, and at length submitted and craved quarter.

Penetrated with a sense of divine goodness, as many wicked men have been for a time, Clovis submitted to the instructions of Remi, bishop of Rheims, whom the queen sent to teach him. The chief difficulty he started was, that his people would not follow him in his change of religion. This was obviated by the facility with which they received Remi's lessons. What the lessons were, and what exercises of mind and conscience attended the change, we know not; the external circumstances and forms alone we are informed of, and they are not very instructive. The king himself was baptized at Rheims, and so was his sister, and three thousand of his army. He was at that time the only prince who professed orthodox Christianity. Anastasius, the Eastern emperor, favoured heresy; the rest of the European princes were Arians. Thus a woman was employed as the instrument of a change in her husband; it is true the change was only nominal, but it was followed by very signal effects in Europe, namely, by the recovery of the apostolical faith, and no doubt by the happy conversion of many individuals.

In the year 494, Gontamond, the Vandal, still increasing his kindness to the church, opened all the places of public worship, after they had been shut ten years and a half, and, at the desire of Eugenius, recalled all the other bishops. He died in the year 496, and was succeeded by his brother Thrasamond.

Gontamond
favours the
Christians,
A. D. 494.
Dies, 496.

AND here I finish the general history of the West, for this century. Much, both of Divine providence and of Divine grace, appears in it. Superstition had grown gradually in this and the former century. Relics, and various other instruments of the same class, were fast advancing into reputation. The monastic solitudes were strongly calculated to augment these evils; and, in the writings of various pious persons, the unguarded and very injudicious addresses to martyrs, which occur frequently, and which were rather rhetorical flights than real prayers, countenanced exceedingly the growing spirit of apostasy. Every new ceremony, while men were in this frame, strength-

* Greg. Tur. II. hist. c. 22vi.

ened the superstitious spirit, and rendered them less disposed to depend on the Saviour, that is, as the apostle says, TO HOLD THE HEAD,* in the faith and love of the Gospel. Had it not been for the great and solid revival of the doctrine of grace in this century, the wholesome effects of which continued all along in the West, Christianity itself, humanly speaking, would have been in danger of total extinction. The intelligent reader will admire the providential and gracious goodness of the Lord, in preparing, furnishing, and giving success to the important labours of Augustine, through which so many in Africa were enabled to glorify their Saviour by faithfulness to death, under a severe persecution. The despoiled, desolated church, at once overborne by heretics, and by barbarous Pagans, still lived in Italy, Spain, France, and Britain, to the end of the century, when Providence raised up a Clovis to support that, of which he himself, however, knew not the value. We leave the church in Italy and Spain, only tolerated, but mildly treated, particularly in the former; in Britain, confined to the mountains of Wales and Cornwall; in France, ready to rise again into eminence; and in Africa, just recovered from a dreadful scourge, in which she had gloriously suffered. The changes of a secular kind, though very great in all this period, and alone moving the hearts of worldly men, could not destroy the Church, whose root is not in the world. The patience of the godly was exercised by them, the sins of the Church were scourged, and the Gospel was communicated to Barbarians. The general current of corrupt doctrine was strongly set in: idolatry was too deeply rooted in men's hearts, to be eradicated from any, except those who were Christians indeed, and we shall ere long see it established in the formality of public worship. Nothing, however, had hitherto happened but what had been predicted. The persecutions of the Church,† the short interval of peace,‡ and the desolations of the empire which succeeded,§ had all been revealed to St. John. And it may deserve to be remarked, that even amidst all this degeneracy and decay, whoever chooses to compare Christian emperors or priests with Pagans in similar situations, will find a great superiority

of character in the former. The meliorating of the condition of slaves, the abolition of tortures, and of other cruel or obscene customs, the institution of various plans for the relief of the poor, and the general improvement of the order of society, are to be attributed in a great measure to the benevolent influence and operation of the Christian religion.

CHAPTER XII.

THE EASTERN CHURCH IN THE FIFTH CENTURY.

THE life and transactions of Chrysostom have introduced us into this scene already, and prepared us to expect no very great work of the spirit of God. The vices which tarnished the West, were superstition, polemical subtilty, and monasticism. These same vices, meeting with little or no check from the revival, which took place in Africa, and spread a benign influence through the Latin churches, prevailed in the East almost universally, and each of them in a much higher degree; yet here and there, the Spirit of God condescended to move amidst the chaos, and it is our duty to watch and discern its operations.

Arsaces, who was very old, and who had been appointed bishop of Constantinople in the room of Chrysostom, died in the year 405. In the next year Atticus, who had been a principal agent in the persecution of Chrysostom,* succeeded him. He seems a person extremely well adapted to an age and metropolis of formal and decent religion, neither so zealous as to give offence by his animadversions, nor so dissolute as to excite disgust by his immoralities. He understood mankind, had good sense; and though he had little learning,† yet he

Death of
Arsaces,
bishop of
Constanti-
nople,
A. D. 405.

* It is very possible this expression may be too strong. The authority for it rests with Palladius, p. 95. The panegyric biographer of Chrysostom might easily magnify the courtly connivance of Atticus into positive persecution.

† Socrates contradicts this; he will have it, that Atticus had much learning, piety, and prudence. I doubt not but he was largely possessed of the last quality. The consideration of the taste and spirit of an author, will explain these contradictions. Decency and

* Coloss. ii. 19.

† Ib. viii. 1.

* Rev. vi.

† Ib. viii.

possessed the art of showing off that little to the best advantage. So exquisite a courtier as he, would naturally gain over large numbers of the discontented; yet there were some, who chose rather to meet for worship in the open fields than to communicate with Atticus. This bishop used to compose sermons, which he recited from memory; at length he ventured to preach extempore, but he was not admired from the pulpit.

Atticus was certainly a person of a candid temper and beneficent disposition. It had been the custom to mention with honour the names of former bishops in the church; and, with a view to conciliate the friends of Chrysostom, he took care to have his name mentioned among the rest. He distributed alms to the poor of other churches besides his own, and sent three hundred pieces of gold to Calliopius, a presbyter of Nice, for the use of such poor as were not common beggars, but persons who were ashamed to beg; and also for the poor of any other communion besides that of the general church.* He said to Asclepius, bishop of the Novatians, "You are happy, who have for fifty years been employed in the service of the church;" and, on all occasions, he behaved with kindness to these dissenters, and very justly owned their faithfulness to the common cause of Christianity in the days of Constantine and Valens. Were all this liberality of sentiment and practice founded on Christian faith and love, it would doubtless be highly laudable in Atticus: such as he is, in virtues and vices, I have represented his character, and must leave him to that Being to whom judgment belongs. He died in the twenty-first year of his bishopric.

During the reign of Theodosius the younger, the son and successor of Arcadius, the Christians in Persia were persecuted grievously, says Theodoret;† were kindly protected, and allowed to propagate the Gospel there, says Sozomen.‡ Very circumstantial details are given by both writers, perfectly conformable to this opposition of accounts. As both the writers were well informed and credible, I judge, that both accounts may be true in different periods of the reign of Isdegerdes; and the more so, as the Persian Magi might have a great share of

the king's confidence at one time, and not at another. And, as the persecution was occasioned by the indiscreet zeal of a Christian, it is most probable, that the favourable period was first in order. According to these views, the series of events seems summarily to have been as follows: Maruthas, bishop of Mesopotamia, acquired the favour of the Persian monarch, and, notwithstanding the fraudulent arts of the Magi, almost persuaded him to be a Christian. But toward the end of his reign, a bishop, called Audas, presuming probably on the royal favour, destroyed one of the temples, where the Persians adored the fire. The action was no less contrary to Christian meekness, than to moral prudence, and deserves to be noticed, as a warning to Christians in all ages, to unite the subtlety of the serpent with the innocence of the dove. Isdegerdes, on the complaint of the Magi, who only wanted such an advantage, sent for Audas, and in soft terms complained of the injury, and ordered him to rebuild the temple. Audas refused to comply, and Isdegerdes in a rage ordered all the Christian churches in his dominions to be destroyed. He had not himself any real degree of Christian light, to enable him to make allowances for the misconduct of an individual. Nor did it ever appear more plainly how unequally the Church of Christ contends with the world, since the mistake of one person laid the foundation of a cruel persecution of thirty years. Isdegerdes began it; and his son and successor Varanes, influenced by the Magi, afflicted the Christians with outrageous barbarity.

The Magi procured orders to be issued out to the chiefs of the Saracens, subjects of Persia, to guard the roads, and to apprehend all Christians, that they might not fly to the Romans. Aspebetes, one of these chiefs, touched with compassion at their distress, on the contrary, assisted them in making their escape. Being accused of this at the court of Persia, he fled with his family to the Romans. He took along with him a number of Arabs, who, together with himself, received Christian baptism, and the real church of Christ probably received an accession from this event.

The afflicted Christians implored the aid of Theodosius, and their entreaties were seconded by the humanity of Atticus, the bishop. In the mean time, the Persian king sent to demand that the

good sense, not much of zealous godliness, appear to have been predominant in Sozomen.

* Sozomen, B. vii. c. 23.

† Theod. B. iii. c. 39.

‡ B. vii. c. 2.

Christian fugitives should be delivered into his hands. To this the emperor would not consent, and a war was the consequence, in which, so far at least as Christianity is concerned, Theodosius had the advantage. An action of Acacius, bishop of Amida, on the frontiers of Persia, in the course of this war, deserves more praise than any military exploits whatever. The Romans^a had taken seven thousand prisoners, whom they would not restore, and who were perishing by famine. The Persian king was much vexed at this, but knew not how to relieve them. Acacius, touched with the distress of the captives, assembled his clergy, and spake thus to them: "Our God has no need either of dishes or cups; since, then, our Church has many gold and silver vessels from the liberality of the people, let us, by means of them, free and relieve these captive soldiers." In effect, he ordered the vessels to be melted down, paid the ransom of the Persians to the Roman soldiers, gave the captives provisions and necessities for their journey, and sent them home to their king. This was to conquer in a Christian manner. The king desired personally to make his grateful acknowledgments to the bishop, who was accordingly directed by Theodosius to wait upon the monarch.

Theodosius had a reign of uncommon length, forty-one years, though he died at the age of forty-nine. He was a feeble prince, and held the affairs of government with a remiss and negligent hand. The public, however, was benefited by the vigorous wisdom of his sister Pulcheria, who, though only two years older, maintained, by meekness and discretion, that ascendant over him, which superior capacity always gives. I have no great matter before me concerning the real Church of Christ at present; and I am not disposed to add one more history, to the many already published, concerning superstitious and marvellous acts, the fame of which now abounded, especially in the East. Let us look, then, at the court of Constantinople a little, and see if we cannot discern some dim traces at least of the features of the Church.

Pulcheria devoted herself to a life of virginity, before she was quite fifteen, and persuaded her two sisters to do the same. At sixteen she took the title of

Augusta, and as she had always the prudence to preserve her brother's honour, she governed in his name with much success; for she was the only descendant of the great and first Theodosius, who possessed any eminence of character. She accustomed her brother to pray frequently, to honour the ministers, and to be upon his guard against novelties in religion. He had the honour of completing the destruction of idolatrous temples and worship. The young emperor rose early to sing with his two sisters the praise of God. He had a great part of the Scriptures by heart, and could discourse of them with the bishops, like an aged minister.^a He took great pains to collect the books of Scripture and their interpreters. His meekness and forgiveness of injuries were exceedingly great. Being once asked, why he never punished with death those who had injured him, "Would to God," he replied, "I could recall the dead to life." To another asking him of the same thing, he said, "It is an easy thing for a man to die, but it belongs to God alone to recover life when departed." His clemency to criminals seems to have been excessive. In compliance with the customs, he exhibited, but with reluctance, the shows of the circus. In the midst of the exhibitions there was once a dreadful tempest; in consequence of which the emperor ordered the criers to warn the people, that it would be much better to leave the shows, and betake themselves to prayer. The motion was accepted: the emperor sang hymns as an example to the rest, and the whole assembly gave themselves up to devotion.

On occasion of good success in his wars, the news arriving while he was exhibiting shows a second time, he persuaded the people, in the same manner, to leave their pleasures, and to join in prayer and praise. He made a law, to forbid in every city even Jews and Pagans to attend the theatre and the circus on the Lord's day, and on certain festivals. He made laws also to prevent the progress of Judaism; but it ought to be added, that he prohibited the molestation of Jews or of Pagans, so long as they lived peaceably under the government. He reduced the penalty of death against heathenism to banishment and confiscation of goods. Such was Theodosius's

^a Socrates, B. vii. 21.

^a Socrates, B. vii. 22.

zeal, which, if it contributed little to the propagation of vital godliness, was doubtless very efficacious in the promotion of external religion.

But, notwithstanding all the encomiums lavished on this emperor, who appears to have truly feared God in the main, it is evident, that the powers of his mind partook of the childish imbecility of his age. A monk, to whom he had refused a favour,* had the boldness to excommunicate him. Theodosius was so much affected, that he declared he would not touch a morsel, till the excommunication was removed. Though informed by the bishop of Constantinople, that he must not regard so irregular an excommunication, he could not be easy, till the monk was found and had restored him to communion. In what bondage did conscientious persons then live! but how little reason have those to triumph over them, who live without conscience, and shut their eyes against the light of the Gospel!

Stilpinius succeeded Atticus at Constantinople, by the general desire of the people. He was a man of simple manners, courteous, and exceedingly liberal to the poor, a character much resembling his predecessor.

The virtue of mutual forbearance between the general church and dissenters prevailed beyond doubt at this time; the prudent and moderate characters of the bishops of both parties, as well as the uncommon meekness of the emperor, contributed much to this.† Could I add to this any clear account of the internal vigorous operations of divine grace, the glory of the Eastern church would have been seldom rivalled; but superstition corroded the vitals of practical religion. One remarkable event, belonging to the reign of Theodosius, deserves, however, to be recorded; a Jewish impostor, in Crete, pretended that he was Moses, and that he had been sent from heaven, to undertake the care of the Cretan Jews, and conduct them over the sea. He preached a whole year in the island, with a view of inducing them to obey his directions. He exhorted them to leave all

their substance, and promised to conduct them through the sea, as on dry land, and bring them into the land of promise. Numbers were so infatuated, as to neglect their business, and leave their possessions to any who chose to seize them. On the day fixed by the impostor, he went before them, and they followed with their wives and little ones. It was a memorable instance of that "blindness" which has happened to Israel till the fullness of the Gentiles be come in," and fulfils the Scripture account of their penal folly. When he had led them to a promontory, he ordered them to throw themselves into the sea. None of them, it seems, had the caution, to insist on his setting the example. Those who were at the brink of the precipice leaped down, many of whom perished, partly dashed against the rocks, and partly drowned; and many more would have perished, had not a number of fishermen providentially been present, who saved their lives. These, enlightened at length by experience, prohibited the rest from taking the leap. And they all now sought the impostor, in order to destroy him: but he had made his escape. Many of the Cretan Jews were on this occasion brought over to the Christian faith.

Two controversies shook the churches of the east in this reign, on which far more has been written than tends to edification. The first was the Nestorian, which was occasioned by the obstinacy of Nestorius, in objecting to a common phrase of the orthodox, namely, "Mary the mother of God." He seems to have regarded the union between the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ rather as moral than real, and to have preferred the idea of a connexion between the two natures to an union. As the last century had been remarkable for heresies, raised on the denial of the union of the three Persons in the Trinity, so this was disturbed by heresies, raised on the denial of the union of the divinity and humanity of the Son of God. Cyril, the bishop of Alexandria, the opposer of Nestorius, seems, on the whole, to have expressed no more than the faith of the primitive church. But the serpentine wits of the East, favoured also by a language of exquisite subtlety and copiousness, found no end in cavilling. Eutyches, the monk, raised a second heresy, which denied the

* Theodoret, v. 30.

† Let an instance of this be drawn from the funeral of Paul, bishop of the Negevates, whose corpse was attended to his grave with singing of psalms by Christians of all denominations. The man, for his holiness of life, had been held in universal estimation.

* Rom. xi.

existence of two natures in the person of Jesus Christ. This extreme is opposite to that of Nestorius. How indecently and fiercely these controversies were agitated, how very little of practical godliness was applied to them by any party, and how much the peace of the church was rent, is well known. It belongs only to my purpose, and it is all the good which I can find in general to have resulted from the contests, to mention, that the doctrines of Scripture were stated by the two councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, and by the writings of those who were most esteemed in the church at that time. Such was the provident care of Christ over his Church, in the preservation of the fundamental truths relating to his person, and the union of the two natures in it, that all attempts to remove them from the mind by explaining them according to men's own imaginations, were subverted; and the doctrine was transmitted safe to the Church in after ages, as the food and nourishment of humble and self-denying souls. The writings of Leo, bishop of Rome, are deservedly admired for their strength and perspicuity in clearing up this subject.

Theodosius died in the year 450. His sister Pulcheria remaining sole mistress of the Eastern empire, gave herself in

A. D. 450. marriage, for political reasons, to Marcian, whom she made emperor; nor does it appear that her religious virtues suffered any diminution till her death. Both Marcian and Pulcheria were as eminent for Christian piety as a superstitious age permitted persons of their exalted stations to be; and Marcian, who survived, died at the age of sixty-

A. D. 457. five, in the year 457, renowned for his services to religion.

The preservation of orthodoxy, the encouragement of good morals, and the destruction of idolatry, were his favourite objects.

Of his successor Leo, it is remarkable, that he forbade any judiciary proceedings on the Lord's day, or any plays and games.

A. D. 469. This law bears date 469. At so late a period did the full observance of the most ancient of all divine institutions receive the sanction of human authority!* The same year he made a law against Simony, requiring men to be promoted to the episcopal office without their own choice, and de-

claring those, who are active in their endeavours for the promotion, to be unworthy of the office.

Gennadius, archbishop of Constantinople, died about the year 473. The most remarkable thing I find in him is, that he never ordained any clergymen who could not repeat the Psalter without book.

Gennadius dies,
A. D. 473.

But I am disgusted with the prospect. It grows worse in the East to the end of the century. Doctrinal feuds and malignant passions involve the whole. Possibly in the view of some private and obscure scenes in the next Chapter, the reader may find something more worthy of his attention.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHRISTIAN WRITERS OF THIS CENTURY.

THE great luminary of the fifth century has been copiously reviewed. The greatest praise of some of the rest is, that they illustrated and defended the evangelical views of faith and practice through him revived; yet amidst the gloom of superstition we may discover several rays of godliness, even among persons who had never read the bishop of Hippo.

MARK,* the hermit, lived about the beginning of this century. He wrote on the spiritual life, and describes the conflicts and labours of men truly serious for eternity. Many of the ascetical or mystic writers are tarnished with Semi-Pelagianism. Mark is in the main a humble advocate for the doctrines of grace, and feels the depravity and helplessness of human nature. He describes views of the spirituality of the Law and the grace of the Gospel; and, amidst all his care to promote practical godliness, he protests against the idea of our being justified by our works, as a very dangerous notion. I regret that I can communicate no more of such a man. Even of his country I can find no account, except that he belonged to the Eastern church.

THEOPHILUS, bishop of Alexandria, the unrighteous persecutor of Chrysostom, does not deserve a place in this list, on account of his writings, which are futile,

* See Genesis ii.

* See Du Pin, from whom I derive particular information on subjects of this nature.

and breathe a worldly spirit. But a reflection he made at the hour of his death may merit the attention of political and ambitious dignitaries of the church. "How happy," said he, "art thou, Arsenius, to have had always this hour before thine eyes!" which shows, said a writer of that time, that monks who retire from the world to mourn in the wilderness, die more peaceably than bishops, who go out of their dioceses to disturb the peace of the church by caballing at court. It seems, Theophilus had lived, as if he were never to die.

PAULINUS, of Nola, if not one of the most learned, was one of the most humble and pious writers of his time. He was

Paulinus of Nola, born, A. D. 453.

born at Bourdeaux about the year 453. He had a classical style and taste, and being of an illustrious family, had advanced to the greatest dignities of the empire. He married Therasia, a rich lady, by whom he obtained a great estate. It pleased God to inspire his wife with the love of heavenly things, and she had great influence in inducing her husband to prefer a retired life before the grandeur of the world. In the prosecution of this scheme there was as much of genuine piety, and as little of superstition as in any saints of these times. He gradually parted with his wealth, and observed in one of his epistles, that it was to little purpose for a man to give up his worldly wealth, except he denied himself; and that a man might renounce the world heartily, who did not part with all his riches. The people of Barcelona in Spain, where he lived in retirement, conceived so great an esteem for him, that they insisted on his ordination. He writes thus on the occasion to a friend: "On Christmas-day," said he, "the people obliged me to receive the order of priesthood, against my will: not that I have any aversion to the office; on the contrary, I could have wished to have begun at the porter's order, and so have gradually risen into the clerical; I submitted, however, to Christ's yoke, and am now engaged in a ministry beyond my merit and strength. —I can scarcely yet comprehend the weight of that dignity; I tremble, when I consider its importance, conscious as I am of my own weakness: but he that giveth wisdom to the simple, and out of the mouths of sucklings perfects praise, is able to accomplish his work in me, to give me his grace, and to make me

worthy, whom he called when unworthy."*

After this he lived sixteen years at Nola, in privacy, where at length he was ordained bishop in 469. The incursions of the Goths disturbed him for some time; and on this occasion it was that he prayed in the manner that

his friend Augustine tells us, that the Lord would not suffer him to be tormented on account of worldly goods, as he had long been weaned from them in his affections. It pleased God, that after the assault of Nola by the Goths was over, he peaceably enjoyed his bishopric till his death in 431.

This holy person was intimately acquainted with Alipius, bishop of Tagasta, whom we have already celebrated as the townsman and friend of Augustine. Through this connexion he became acquainted with the writings of the bishop of Hippo, which were peculiarly adapted to the taste of one, who, like Paulinus, knew what indwelling sin means. Hence arose a very peculiar friendship between the two bishops, cemented by their common interest in the privileges and doctrines of the Gospel.

His letter to Amandus gives an excellent view of his divinity, which illustrates both from the Old and New Testament, much after the manner of the bishop of Hippo. In writing to Delphinus, who had been dangerously sick, he speaks of the benefit of afflictions to the righteous, as they exercise their godliness, keep them from pride, and imprint in them the fear of divine justice, which will dreadfully confound the ungodly, since it so severely chastises the righteous.

Paulinus was intimate with Sulp-

* This humble and serious language is the obvious effect of a spirit truly conscientious, deeply sensible of the holiness of God, and its own unworthiness. There is not any thing, in which primitive piety appears to more advantage, when compared to modern religion, than in a review of men's conduct with respect to the pastoral office. In our times it frequently happens, that youths, who have really a religious cast, fancy themselves adequate to the most important of all offices, before they have attained the age of twenty. Parents also too often look on their dulled children, as competent to the sacred function; and it is much to be feared, that worldly lucre is the spring that animates many to press into the ministry, who never had any charity for their own souls.

cius Severus, the historian, who was a priest of Agen, a person of noble birth, fine talents, and much superstition; a disciple of Martin of Tours. That he could unite so much elegance of the Roman language with so much childishness of thought, forms one of those inconsistencies, which abound in human nature. And yet there want not here and there in his History marks of good judgment, and every where a spirit of piety prevails. Paulinus, comparing Sulpicius's conversion with his own, prefers that of his friend, "because, said he, in one of his letters, he had at once shaken off the yoke of sin, and broken the bands of flesh and blood in the flower of his age; and at a time when he was renowned at the bar, and in the career of worldly honour, he despised human greatness, that he might follow Jesus Christ, and preferred the preaching of fishermen before all the pieces of Ciceronian eloquence."

Severus had desired to have Paulinus's picture. The bishop of Nola refused, and called his request a piece of folly. He takes occasion, however, to give a picture of his own heart. Here is one passage of it, much admired by Augustine: "How should I dare to give you my picture, who am altogether like the earthly man, and by my conduct represent the carnal person? On every side shame oppresses me. I am ashamed to have my picture drawn as I am, and I dare not consent to have it made otherwise. I hate what I am, and I am not what I would wish to be. But what avails it me, wretched man, to have evil and love good, since I am what I hate, and cloth hinders me from endeavouring to do what I love? I find myself at war with myself, and am torn by an intestine conflict. The flesh fights against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. The law of the body opposes the law of the spirit. We is me, because I have not taken away the taste of the poisoned tree, by that of the saving cross. The poison communicated to all men from our first parent by his sin yet abideth in me."†

* Ep. 86 of Aug.

† All this is the peculiar language of a Christian, arising from just views of indwelling sin in its nature and its constant influence. Paulinus describes from the heart such things as none but a truly enlightened mind can know: for original sin is not known at all, except by experience. I need not say to the evangelized reader, how consonant this language is to that

In a letter to Florentius, bishop of Cahors, the reader may perhaps find an objection obviated, which might arise from the last article, namely, How can a man who finds himself so miserable, enjoy any consolation? "Jesus Christ, says he, is the rock containing that spring of living water, which we happily find not far from us, when we are very thirsty in this world: this is that which refreshes us, and prevents us from being consumed by the heat of concupiscence. This is the rock on which the house is founded, that shall never fall. This is the rock, which being opened at the side, casts out water and blood, to make us taste of two wholesome fountains, the water of grace, and the blood of the sacrament, which proves at once both the source and the price of our salvation."

In another letter to Augustine, he discourses on the felicity of the saints after the resurrection: "All their employment shall then be, to praise God everlastingly, and to give him continual thanks."

This holy bishop was the delight of his age. He led a retired and temperate life, but with no great austerity, singularly remarkable for the tenderness of his conscience, the meekness of his spirit, and a constant sense of his own imbecility, and of the need of divine grace.

Isidore, of Pelusium in Egypt, spent his whole life in the monastic state, and he did honour to a course of life by no means the wisest. He lived in the practice of serious piety, and by a number of letters which he has left, he appears to have known the world much better, and to have been more useful to the Church, and to society, than might have been expected from a monk.

He observes on the Holy Scriptures, that there is a divine wisdom in ordering some things to be very plain, and others obscure, at once to encourage our investigation, and to check our presumption. He gives good rules for the exposition of

of the best men in the Old Testament, and in the New. And although decent Pharisees may be inclined to think it excessive, I will add, that it is even too faint for the occasion. Every real Christian knows that no words can sufficiently describe the strength of internal corruption. Hence humility, the faith of Christ, the preciousness of the Gospel to the mind, and all the true holiness which is exercised under the sun: and uniformly it appears, that men who know the most of native wickedness, are the most holy in their lives and conversations.

Scripture, guards against the fanciful interpretations of concise expressions, where the connexion has not been considered, and teaches us not to attempt to draw the mysteries of the Gospel from every passage of the Old Testament. He agrees with the orthodox in the great doctrines of the Gospel; his views of divine grace are sound in the main, but escape not the taint of Semi-Pelagianism, which seems to have prevailed over the Eastern church: the doctrine of the African luminary never making any great progress among the Greek churches.

His conduct on occasion of the Nestorian controversy was admirable. He endeavoured to heal the ferocious spirits of the disputants, and condemned the tempers of those, whose doctrines he yet admitted to be sound.

The great excellence of this writer is his practical rules. For a specimen, take his advice to a physician who lived wickedly. "You profess a science requiring much wisdom; but you act inconsistently: you cure small wounds for others, and heal not your own distempers, which are great and dangerous. Begin at home."

CASSIAN was a monk from his childhood, and spent the latter part of his life at Marseilles. He has been before mentioned as the father of Semi-Pelagianism.

His plausible views of moderation led him into inextricable confusion. He allows that grace is necessary even for the beginning of faith. Yet he affirms that man can naturally choose good, but needs grace to accomplish it. He thinks that sometimes grace, and sometimes the will of man, is the first mover. The cases of St. Paul and St. Matthew seem to him to illustrate the first position; those of Zaccheus and the penitent thief the second. In such endless jargon is a sensible man involved, while he vainly mixes opposite things, and forgets the Scripture declaration, "if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace." Yet his system has since been adopted by many of the more decent sort of Christian professors, and will, whatever may be said, recommend itself to all of them, who are unacquainted with the entire depravity of human nature. In him, Semi-Pelagianism found a very powerful guardian, because his learning and morals were unquestionably respectable. And it happens in this case,

that a system which discovers its absurdity and extreme inconsistency to every man endued with any real degree of self-knowledge, exhibits a most plausible appearance in theory, and seems to shun the opposite rocks of self-righteousness and Antinomianism. So it pretends; * "but wisdom is justified of her children."

CELESTINE, bishop of Rome, has already been noticed as supporting Prosper and Hilary, disciples of Augustine in Gaul, against the intrusions of Semi-Pelagianism. He reproveth those French bishops who favoured the doctrines of Cassian, and he published some articles concerning grace, of which a summary has already been given. The earnestness of his manner shows that he felt what he said; and his testimony to the bishop of Hippo deserves to be recorded. "We have always had Augustine, of blessed memory, in our communion, whose life and merit is well known; his fame hath been unblemished, and his knowledge is so indisputable, that my predecessors have looked upon him as one of the most excellent teachers of the Church. All

Celestine
bishop of
Rome.

* Cassian wrote monastic rules and institutions, in which he teaches "for doctrines the commandments of men." He instructs the poor monks in their duties of implicit submission, and of voluntary humility, by which their understanding would rather be enslaved, than any true mortification of sin acquired. In nothing does the system of Augustine triumph more sensibly over that of Cassian, than in this point of view. I conceive these two men both engaged in the design of leading men to a holy life. With superstition they both were infected. But in Cassian the fashionable evil prevails, reduces itself into a system, and leads the devotees into a tedious number of artificial externals, with an intention to break the human will, and force it into something like virtue. What for instance, can be more absurd than his directions to the young probationer, to subject himself absolutely to the will of his superior in the convent? To submit to orders in a manner impossible to be executed, to endure hardships and crosses, without any reason but the arbitrary will of a master? Follies which, to the papacy, have continued for ages after. But see Augustine. His system leads him to stem a torrent of superstition: to attempt, at least, to emancipate Christians from the yoke of bondage (to teach true, not fictitious, internal, not merely external, humility: to lead the soul to Christ, to instruct men in love, to enforce Christian practice from spiritual motives) in fine, to aim at purity of heart, and heavenly-mindedness.

orthodox Christians have ever thought well of him; and he hath been generally revered through the whole world."—The church of Rome, though at this time much degenerated from primitive purity, must not, however, be deemed antichristian, while the doctrines of Christ were supported in it. And though secular ambition was gradually making its way among her bishops, yet some of them were real good men and faithful pastors; and I am willing to believe that Cælestine was of the number.

See the zeal and uprightness of this bishop, in the subject of episcopal ordination. A person, named Daniel, who had come from the East, retired into France. The monastery where he lived accused him of scandalous crimes. Yet he had the address to get himself ordained a bishop in that country. Cælestine, in vain, had endeavoured to prevent this. He blames the bishop who had ordained him, and declares, that he had lost the episcopal dignity himself by ordaining one so unworthy. It does not appear that he fulminated a decree of excommunication against him. The superior dignity of the bishop of Rome in the Western world was hitherto rather founded on the opulence of the see, and the civil importance of the city of Rome, than on any positive claims of dominion. Cælestine's conduct was more like that of a Christian bishop than of a pope. He found fault with the conduct of the hierarchy in France, in raising at once to the episcopal office* laymen who had not gone through the several gradations of the priesthood. He **DECREES**, that when a bishop is to be chosen, the clergy of the same church, whose characters are known, and who have deserved well, be preferred to strange and unknown clergymen; that a bishop be not imposed on any people against their consent, but that the votes and agreement of the clergy, people, and magistrates, be followed; that no clergyman be chosen out of another diocese, when there is any one in the same church fit to be ordained bishop.

* Fleury, B. xlv. 56.

† I use reluctantly the word Decree, because for some time the admonitions of the Bishop of Rome had gone by the name of Decretals; though certainly as yet, bishops, out of Italy at least, were not under his jurisdiction. However, the imperative style of the Roman bishops at this time is indefensible, and intimates the too great growth of their power.

The same soundness of judgment which led Cælestine to oppose interested ordinations, and the undue interference of secular ambition, induced him also to oppose the democratic spirit, as appears from his letter to the bishops of Calabria and Apulia, whom he forbids to ordain laymen bishops on the demand of the people. "When this demand is against the rules of the Church, it should never be complied with."*

The three contemporary Greek historians, who continued ecclesiastical history, where Eusebius ended, through the fourth and part of the fifth century, are Sozrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret of Cyrus. I have made use of them all along, and find them particularly serviceable, where I have not the much more satisfactory lights of the fathers themselves, whose transactions are recorded. The first is doubtless a judicious writer, remarkable for his candour to the Novatians, and for a generous peaceable temper. Neither he nor Sozomen furnish us with sufficient documents, from which a decisive judgment of their own personal characters may be formed. The latter is less judicious, and very fond of monks.

The third, however, surpasses all men in admiration of monastic institutions, and is credulous beyond measure in subjects of that nature. Yet was he himself one of the most learned and best men in the Eastern church. His pacific conduct displeased the bigots, during the noise of the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies. It is evident, that his own views were orthodox; but because he inclined to healing methods, he was condemned at one of the synods, and was not without difficulty reinstated. Hear him speak in his letter to Leo of Rome, which will give us an epitome of his character and story.†

Character of Theodoret.

Condemned in the Synod of Ephesus.

† "I have been a bishop these twenty-six years without reproach. I have brought over to the Church above a thousand Marcionites and many Arians. There is not now an heretic in the eight hundred parishes of my diocese. Often have I been assaulted with stones, and have sus-

* Cælestine succeeded Boniface I., A. D. 423; died in 432. He sent Deputies to the third General Council held at Ephesus, in June 431.

† Fleury, xxvii. 44.

tained combats with Pagans and Jews.—

Restored
at the
Fourth
General
Council
held at
Chalcedon
A. D. 451.

Rejoice not, I beseech you, my humble prayer, nor despise my old age, loaded with disgrace, after so many labours.—God is my witness, that I am not concerned for my own honour, but on account of the scandal given,

and lest several of the ignorant, and particularly of the converted heretics, should look on me as heretical, seeing the authority of those who have condemned me; and without considering that for so many years of my episcopacy, I have neither acquired house, nor land, nor money, but have embraced a voluntary poverty."

He was born at Antioch, in the year 386, and ordained bishop of Cyrus, a city of Syria, by the bishop of Antioch, about the year 420. The inhabitants spake chiefly the Syrian tongue, few of them understood Greek; and heathenish ignorance prevailed among them. The most shining part of Theodoret's character appeared in his pastoral employments. He laboured, and suffered for the love of Christ, and was often in danger of his life from the rage of the multitude. But God gave success to his endeavours in the manner stated above, and he found, what persevering pastors often find, the love of his people to attend him at his latter end. He resided constantly in his diocese, and no doubt was signally useful in it, by preaching and by example. When called, which was but seldom, by the superior bishop or patriarch of Antioch, to attend his synod, he went and preached on those occasions at Antioch in a manner that left a deep impression. All the time he was bishop, he had no suits at law with any man, nor did he or his clergy ever appear at the judgment-seats. His liberality was unbounded; and in every part of Christian morals he appears to have exhibited that peculiar spirit which none but true Christians are able to do.

The authority of Leo, bishop of Rome, was of service to him in the persecution before spoken of; and he died peacefully in his bishopric; though calumny and prejudice after his death prevailed so far as to procure his condemnation in the time of Justinian. His works are large, on a variety of subjects; but they speak not for him equally with his life; and it

will be sufficient to say, that his theology, with a strong mixture of superstition, was of the same kind as that of Chrysostom. But his spirit was humble, heavenly, charitable; and he seems to have walked in the faith, hope, and love, of the Gospel, a shining ornament in a dark age and country.

Leo, bishop of Rome, was one of the greatest men of his time. In secular affairs, his successful negotiations have already been noticed. In the church, it must be owned that he took much pains concerning matters of discipline; that so far as appears from circumstances, he supported

Leo made
bishop of
Rome,

A. D. 440.

the cause of truth and uprightness in general, though with a constant attention to the amplification of the Roman See. Antichrist was not yet risen to its stature; but was growing apace. He attempted to extend his influence in France, but met with a firm resistance. The celibacy of the clergy was more strictly enforced by him than by any bishop of Rome before. Yet, in Christian doctrine he was not only evangelical in general, but also in a very elaborate and perspicuous manner, so as to evince the pains he had taken to understand the Scriptures. His letter to the Eastern churches, on the divine and human nature of Christ, is allowed to have been remarkably scriptural. He opposed Pelagianism with much zeal; he detected the evasions of its defenders, who made grace the effect of human merits; and he resolved every thing into the grace of God in so full and clear a manner, that if his own heart was influenced by the sentiments which he expressed, he must have been a humble, holy Christian. But his piety was not so unquestionable as his capacity and accuracy of sentiment. Candour, however, will rather incline to impute what is suspicious in his conduct, to the times, than to his disposition. Leo justly reprov'd the great and scandalous violations of order and decorum in the African ordinations of bishops, which preceded the invasion of Genseric. And he has left us several decrees, from which the reader may collect what were the ancient ideas of pastoral and ecclesiastical discipline.

"What, says this prelate, can be the meaning of laying hands suddenly on any man; but the conferring of priests' orders on persons of whose worth we are ignorant,—before we have had time to

try them; before they have approved themselves competent by their industry, and have given some tokens of knowledge and experience?"

He is of opinion, that pastors should have passed through all the inferior orders, and have exercised them for some time, before they be appointed bishops.

He declares, that those who have not been chosen by the clergy, nor desired by the people, nor ordained by the bishops of the province, with the consent of the metropolitan, are not to be accounted bishops.

"He ought to be chosen bishop, who is chosen by the clergy and people. In case their judgment be divided, the metropolitan should prefer him who is of greatest worth, and hath most votes. But no man should be appointed bishop whom the people refuse."

"He, who would go from one church to another, out of contempt of his own, shall be deprived both of that which he hath, and of that which he would have; that he may neither preside over those whom, through avarice, he hath desired, nor those whom, through pride, he hath despised."

Bishop Leo himself preached and fed his flock at Rome; and a number of his sermons are yet extant. The faith of the church, concerning the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ, was not neglected in the course of his ministry. This was still the prevailing doctrine, notwithstanding the subtil and manifold opposition made to it. Leo himself was one of the ablest instruments of its vindication; and whether it is probable that he was so only in a speculative manner, let the reader judge from the following passage of his ninth sermon on the Nativity. "For unless faith believe, that both substances were united in one person, language explains it not; and therefore matter for divine praise never fails, because the abilities of him who praises never suffice. Let us rejoice, then, that we are unequal to speak of so great a mystery of our mercy; and when we are not able to draw forth the depth of our salvation, let us feel that it is good for us to be vanquished in our researches. For no

Leo dies, man more approaches to the A. D. 461. knowledge of the truth, than he who understands, that in divine things, though he makes much

proficiency, something always remains for him to investigate."

HILARY, bishop of Arles,* was the successor of Honoratus in that see. The latter was abbot of the monastery of Lerins,† an isle of France, famous in those days for its monks. He took pains to draw Hilary into serious Arles.

Christianity, which in these times was too much connected with the monastic life. Honoratus himself was afterwards chosen bishop of Arles, and his disciple Hilary was unanimously elected to succeed him. Hilary has left us the *Life of Honoratus*; in which he vindicates the custom of writing eulogiums on deceased holy men. He says, with a happy inconsistency, for he must be considered as a Semi-Pelagian, "God is praised in his saints, as all their worth and excellency ought to be imputed to the Author of Grace." An excellent sentiment, and truly Christian! Let it only be firmly and consistently maintained, and let it influence the heart; men then must be humble, the grace of Christ must engage their whole dependence; and they, who hold in sentiment the doctrines of Cassian, will only be found to be illogically defective in their arguments, not unsound in their practical views. However, the fashionable prevalence of the sentiments of Cassian in France, and the plausible support which they received from several highly respected characters, besides Hilary of Arles, would no doubt have a pernicious effect on the minds of the next generation.

No fault can be found with Hilary's writing the life of a saint. But the manner of his doing it, though unhappily by no means singular, is to be blamed. With him, Honoratus is all excellency, and looks more like an angel than a man. Suffice it just to mention the circumstances of his exit. He fell into a languishing distemper, which yet hindered him not from executing his priestly office. He preached in the church in the year

* This is not the Hilary, who, in conjunction with Prosper, supported in France the doctrine of Augustine, concerning grace. His sentiments approach more to Semi-Pelagianism: yet he deserves a place in these memoirs, because he held, implicitly at least, the fundamentals of divine truth: was truly humble and pious; and evidenced to all men, that he was a sincere member of the Church of Christ.

† Now called St. Honorat, or Honore de Lerins.

429, but his disease increasing, he died a few days after. Hilary bears

Honoratus witness to the piety of his last hours, having been present with him.
A. D. 429.

The Life of Hilary himself is written, it is supposed, by Honoratus,* bishop of Marseilles, with the same partial exaggerations. Yet some circumstances are mentioned which bear strong marks of credulity. He often admonished in private the governor of the city, whose conduct had been very faulty, and seeing him one day come into church with his guards, he broke off in the midst of his discourse, and said, that those, who disregarded private admonitions, were unworthy of public. It is recorded, to the praise of this bishop, that, though he knew how to address the most polished auditory, and occasionally showed great literary powers, he could, however, adapt himself in the plainest manner to the apprehensions of the vulgar: a rare, but precious talent of a preacher, and surely more dependent on the heart than the head. The labours of this holy person were very great, and in preaching he was so zealous, that he was obliged to check himself by a sign agreed on, lest he should carry his discourse to too great a length. Prosper candidly allows, that his life and death were holy. Leo, of Rome, who had an unhappy quarrel with him to his lifetime, spoke honourably of him after his death. I have only to regret that I have it not in my power to gratify the reader with more particulars of the labours and works of so pious a man, and so zealous a preacher.

VINCENTINUS, of the same monastery of Lerins, was likewise renowned for his piety. He left behind him a treatise on the marks of heresy.

Vincen- With him, besides the testimony of Scripture, uni-
tius of versality and antiquity are
Lerins. added as essential and concurring requisites of the evidence of orthodoxy; and though papacy can by no means stand the test of these, (for it had not as yet properly existed in the church,) it has notwithstanding availed itself of his rules, and pressed them into her service.

EUGENIUS, of Lyons, is another of the same stamp, and his excellent life and

Eucherius
Bp. of
Lyons,

death are attested by Pros- A. D. 431.
per. Died, 430.

Prosper, of Riez in Aquitaine, was a layman who distinguished himself in this century in the defence of the doctrines of grace. He largely extracted from Augustine's works the fundamentals of his positions; and wrote with much earnestness a defence of them. He was engaged in a laboured controversy with the Semi-Pelagians in France; but controversy, managed with a spirit like his, serious, candid, and argumentative, not abusive and censorious, and conversant on topics of real importance, is an advantage, not a detriment to the cause of true religion. He bears a cheerful testimony to the solid piety of several of his opponents in France, as we have seen already, and appears only zealous for divine truths, and not for any particular party. It was an advantage to the truth revived by Augustine, that under the cautious and judicious management of Prosper, it was cleared of objections and explained, and rescued from aspersions, without losing any thing of its sterling purity. Of Prosper himself, I can say nothing; except that his writings speak for his piety, humility and integrity. Suffice it to give two or three quotations,* one of which obviates the most specious objections that have been made to the sentiments of Augustine: "Setting aside that distinction which the divine knowledge confines within the secret of eternal justice, we ought most sincerely to believe and profess, that God would have all men to be saved; since the apostle, whose sentence this is, most earnestly directs, what in all churches is most purely observed, that prayer be made to God for all men, whose, that many perish, is the desert of those who perish; that many are saved, is the gift of the Saviour."

"Let human debility, says he, acknowledge itself, and the condemned succession of all generations in the first birth; and when the dead are quickened, the blind illuminated, the ungodly jus-

* *Pro. Aug. dist.*

† The attentive reader has seen this to be the sentiment of the anonymous author of the calling of the Gentiles. Perhaps no two propositions are more copiously and decisively repeated than these two of Prosper. It is the vain attempt to cheat those of a supposed inconsistency, which has confounded many readers. The Church of England has exactly let this medium in all her public writings. To know where to stop is true wisdom.

tified, let them confess Jesus Christ their life, and light, and righteousness."

"We act with liberty, but with liberty redeemed, over which God is the governor."

"Grace does more than persuade and teach by kind advice and exhortation; it changes also the mind within, and forms it anew, and from a broken vessel makes it new in the energy of creation. This, not the admonitions of the Law, not the words of a prophet, not nature so studiously preferred to her, performs. He only who made, renews. An apostle may run through the world, preach, exhort, plant, water, rebuke, and be urgent; but that the hearer may benefit by these means, neither the scholar, nor the teacher effects, but GRACE alone.—This orders the seed of faith to take root in the mind, this keeps and cherishes the harvest to maturity.—It is God who raises the dead, frees the prisoners, pours understanding into dark hearts, and infuses love, by which we love him again: and the love which he infuses is himself."

Once more: hear his vigorous testimony to the entire depravity of nature, from a practical sense of which, he was, I doubt not, led to see the suitableness of his views of grace to the exigencies of fallen humanity.

"The mind, which originally had light from the Supreme Light, involves the will in darkness, and leaving the light, chooses to grow black in earthly darkness; nor can it voluntarily lift up its captive eyes on high, because, by the robbery of the tyrant, it hath even lost the knowledge of the greatness of the wound under which it lies prostrate."

PRIMASIAS was an African bishop, who for some years attended the ministry of Augustine, whose views he followed, as

Primasius, a disciple of Augustine.

appears from his writings, particularly his comments on St. Paul's epistles. But though he seems conversant

in the writings of Augustine and Jerom, he is not a mere copyist, but discovers an original vein of thought, and appears to have been well furnished with polite learning. He says, "Faith is the gift of God, and is infused by the secret inspiration of grace, not by human labour, nor by nature, but by the Holy Spirit." He vehemently opposes self-righteous sentiments, and defends with much accuracy the genuine doctrines of the Gospel." It is surprising, that of so able a writer,

we should have no account with respect to his life and transactions.*

TIMOTHEUS ALEXANDRUS, bishop of Alexandria, wrote nothing worthy of a distinct memorial. I mention him only as an instance of the unhappy state of that once flourishing Christian city. It had a succession of turbulent, ambitious bishops: the bad effect on the inhabitants was but too fully evidenced by their conduct: they had murdered his predecessor, and the way which he took to fix himself in his See, was by flattering them in their vices. I scarcely remember anything good of Alexandria in all this century. It seems to have been precipitating itself into the darkness of Mahometanism, which God was preparing for it as a scourge on account of its dreadful abuse of the light of the Gospel.

SALVIAN, priest of Marseilles, was an eloquent, neat and beautiful writer. His manner is very serious, and he presses the necessity of good works, and particularly of almsgiving, with great vehemence. He excels in vindicating the judgments of God on the wicked nominal Christians of his time. But of his acquaintance with real Christianity, from the scanty materials which I have seen of him, I find no evidence.

HONORATUS, bishop of Marseilles, is celebrated as a great extempore preacher; his ministry was much attended by clergy and people, and he was desired often to preach in other churches. Gelasius, bishop of Rome, had a high esteem for him. These accounts may seem simple and mean; but much evidence arises from them, that true religion had some prevalence in France in this century. Much preaching and much controversy on matters of evangelical importance, though attended with evils, prove that Christ is present by his Spirit.

Honoratus, the bishop of Marseilles, died about A. D. 594.

FAUSTUS, bishop of Ries, was an Englishman, and was first a monk of the monastery of Lerins, of which he was chosen abbot. After the death of Maximus, bishop of Ries, he was chosen his successor. He composed several treatises, governed his diocese piously, led a holy life, and died regretted and esteemed by the church. Though, in the controversy which has so much called for our attention in this century, he favoured the Semi-Pelagians, he seems to have

* Centur. Magdeb. Century V. c. x.

done so rather through fear of the abuses of predestination, and a misunderstanding of the consequences of Augustine's doctrine, than through the want of piety and humility. For he composed a treatise concerning Saving Grace, in which he showed that the grace of God always abounds, precedes, and assists the human will, and that all the reward of our labour, is the gift of God. A priest, named Lucidus, was very tenacious of the sentiments of Augustine, and was opposed at least by the greater part of the French bishops in his neighbourhood. Faustus endeavoured to correct his ideas, by suggesting, that we must not separate grace and human industry; that we must *abhor Pelagius*, and yet detest those who believe that a man may be in the number of the elect without labouring for salvation. He adds many other cautionary maxims of the same kind, to which no sober and judicious follower of Augustine will object. His treatment of Lucidus is gentle and candid. Hence I wonder not that the presbyter was induced, at the council which was called, to assent to all that was required of him.

On the whole, after a careful review of the lights of antiquity on this subject, it appears to me, that there were a number of serious and pious persons on both sides of the question in France; that the controversy was carried on with a degree at least of moderation; that men, who really feared God, and lived by faith on his Son, in practical humility, differed rather in words than in things, while they debated on this difficult subject: that yet the views of Augustine are scriptural, and most consistent, and would in all ages, be allowed so to be, if men had a sufficient degree of patient attention to distinguish his positions from the abuses which may be made of them; that the Semi-Pelagian notions have, however, been held by men, whose experience was contradictory to their sentiments, men truly pious and holy: but, that the danger of those notions (as all errors in subjects relating to grace must be dangerous) lies in the bad use, which persons unacquainted with the operations of the Holy Spirit will be sure to make of them. France was at this time divided between the two parties; but as ignorance of true religion increased, Augustine's views of grace grew less and less fashionable, and were confined to particular situations, while wickedness flourished.

I add only, that profaneness has no right to triumph on account of these controversies. Their existence, and the serious and charitable manner of conducting them, showed that real godliness was alive in that country; nor is it probable, that there was, in any part of the world, at that time, more genuine piety than in France. When men are silent on topics of divine grace, when they gladly listen to the sneers of secular writers, who affect to treat all the controversialists with equal contempt, and are content to think so superficially on religion, as to live without any determinate sentiments on the doctrines of Scripture, then is the time when wickedness will reign without a check; and then what is called philosophy will domineer. God hath left such a people, for the present at least, to their own imaginations.

VICTOR, of Vita, of whose affecting history of the African persecutions I have made much use, Victor. and who himself suffered for righteousness sake, will deserve to be added to this list.

OF GELASIUS, bishop of Rome, no more needs to be added to what has been said, than that he wrote zealously against Pelagianism. Gelasius.

JULIAN POMERIUS, a priest in France about the end of this century, deserves attention for his practical works. A few sentences, descriptive of the Julian characters of good and bad Pomerius. bishops and preachers, will show the taste of the times, as well as afford some sentiments not uninteresting to the pastors of this day.

"A wicked bishop seeks after preferment and riches; chiefly aims to gratify his passions, to confirm his authority, and to enrich himself. He avoids the laborious and humbling part of his office, and delights in the pleasant and the honourable." Julian applies to such men's consideration the views of the 34th chapter of Ezekiel. "A good bishop converts sinners to God by his preaching and example—lastly, he binds himself fast to God only, in whom alone he puts his trust."

The difference between a good and a bad preacher he thus lays down: "The one seeks the glory of Jesus Christ, by explaining doctrines in familiar discourse. The other uses the utmost strength of his eloquence to gain reputation. The latter handles trifles with elaborate language; the former elevates a plain discourse by the weight of his thoughts."

CENTURY VI.

CHAPTER I.

THE LIFE OF FULGENTIUS, AND THE
STATE OF THE AFRICAN CHURCHES
IN HIS TIME.

IN the year 495, a storm began again to lower over the African Churches. Thrasamond, whose reign then commenced, as

Thrasamond,
king of the
Vandals in
Africa,
begins his
reign,
A. D. 495.

obstinate in Arianism as Huneric, but more sagacious and less bloody, mingled the arts of gentleness and severity against them. On the one hand he strove to gain over the orthodox by lucrative motives, on the other he forbade the ordination of bishops in the vacant Churches.* Eugenius, whose faithfulness was so severely tried in the former persecution, had been called to sleep in Jesus before the commencement of this. The African bishops showed however that divine grace had not forsaken them. They determined unanimously not to obey an order, which threatened the extinction of orthodoxy. They ordained bishops, and filled the vacant Sees, though they foresaw the probability of Thrasamond's resentment. But they thought it their duty to take care of their flocks at this hazard, rather than to seem to consent to the king's unrighteous

Thrasamond per-
secutes
with se-
verity.

prohibitions. Thrasamond, enraged, determined to banish them all. Fulgentius about that time was chosen bishop of Ruspe. In him we behold another instance of the effects of the religion revived under Augustine. Fulgentius's life is written by one of his disciples, and dedicated to Felician, a bishop, who was the successor of Fulgentius. The review of it, and of his own works, will give us a specimen of the power of divine grace victoriously struggling under all the disadvantages of monastic superstition, and the childish ignorance of a barbarous age. Fulgentius was descended from a noble family in Carthage, where his father was a senator.

His grandfather Gordian, flying from the arms of Huneric, retired into Italy. After his decease, two of his sons, returning into Africa, now settled under the Vandal government, found their family-mansion possessed by the Arian clergy. By royal authority however they received part of their patrimony, and retired to Constantine. In that part of the world, at Tellepte, Fulgentius was born, being the son of Claudius, one of the brothers, and of Mariana, a Christian lady, who, being soon left a widow, gave her son a very liberal education, for which Constantine afforded at that time peculiar advantages; and thus his mind became stored with Greek and Roman learning. As he increased in religious seriousness, he inclined more and more to a monastic life, for which he gradually prepared himself by successive austerities in Africa, the country of his father, to which he returned with his mother. He was received into the monastery of Faustus, a bishop whom the Arian persecution had banished from his diocese to a place contiguous to it, where he erected his monastery. The spirit and fashion of the times so transported him, that, at first, he refused even to see his own mother who came to visit him, though he afterwards behaved to her with the greatest filial duty. He underwent severe bodily sufferings from the renewal of the Arian persecution. He was beaten with clubs so cruelly, that he confessed afterwards he scarcely found himself capable of enduring the pain any longer, and was glad to induce his tormentors by some conversation to allow an interval to his afflictions. For he seems to have been of a weak and delicate constitution, and the softness of his early education rendered him unfit to bear much hardship. His mind, however, appears to have been serene and faithful to his Saviour, whom, in real humility and sincerity though tarnished with the superstition of the times, he served according to the fundamentals of the Gospel. The Arian bishop of Carthage, who had known Fulgentius, and esteemed his character, highly disapproved of this treatment, which he had received from a presbyter

* See Fleury, B. XXX. Vol. iii.

of his own religion and diocese, and told the injured youth, that, if he would make a formal complaint before him, he would avenger his cause. Many advising him to do so, "It is not lawful," says Fulgentius, "for a Christian to seek revenge. The Lord knows how to defend his servants. Should the presbyter through me be punished, I shall lose the reward of my patience with God, and the more so, as it would give an occasion of stumbling to the weak, to see an Arian punished by a Monk." By and by he retired into the more interior parts of Africa. Some time after he sailed to Syracuse, and then visited Rome, and saw there king Theodoric in the midst of a magnificent assembly. If men in this life, seeking vanity, attain such dignity, what will be the glory of saints who seek true honour in the new Jerusalem!—thus was the reflection of Fulgentius. Ruspæ in Africa was

Fulgentius, Bishop of Ruspæ, banished into Sardinia.

the place to which, much against his will, he was at length elected bishop: but this exaltation lessened not the severity of his way of life: and by the Arian persecution he was banished into Sardinia, in company with other faith-

ful witnesses of orthodoxy. Upwards of sixty bishops were with him in exile. Theodoric sent more still into Sardinia, in A.D. 520, exerted himself mightily in overruling the constancy of the orthodox, and delighted to ensure them with capricious questions. Fulgentius was sent for by him to Carthage, and by his skill in argument, and his readiness in answering questions, excited the king's admiration—till through the advice of his Arian clergy, who looked on the presence of Fulgentius as dangerous at Carthage, he was re-

Hilarius, successor of Thrasamond, A. D. 523.

manded to Sardinia. Soon after, Hilarius, the successor of Thrasamond, in the year 523, favouring the orthodox, put a total end to the persecution, and Ruspæ once more beheld her bishop.

He lived among his flock from this time to his death, eminent in piety, humility, and charity. For near seventy

Fulgentius dies, A. D. 520.

days he suffered extreme pains in his last sickness—"O Lord, give patience here and rest hereafter," was his constant prayer—and he died at length,

as he had lived, an edifying example of every Christian virtue. I feel almost

ashamed to have written so barren a life of a man undoubtedly excellent in godliness. But the reader, as well as myself, must be content with the poverty of materials. In an age of learning and genius the life of Fulgentius would have shown abundantly. In his treatise to Morinus on Predestination, he observes,* "The internal master, from whom we have received the supply of celestial doctrine, not only opens to inquirers the secrets of his words, but does also himself inspire the grace to make inquiry. For we cannot so much as hunger after the bread which comes down from heaven, unless an appetite be given to persons before fastidious, by him who deigns also to give himself to satisfy the hungry. From him it is, that thirsting we run to the fountain, who affords to us himself, that we may drink." He afterwards expresses himself with great energy "on the internal doctrine of divine inspiration, where truth speaks the sweeter, as it is the more secret." I shall not expect any man, but one who is truly taught of God, to give a candid interpretation of this. "I pray to be taught many more things which I do not know, by him, from whom I have received the little which I do know. I beg by his preventing and following grace to be instructed,"† &c. In what follows he shows how seriously he had made the sentiments of Augustine his own, in discussing points exceedingly intricate, with that author's modesty and dexterity, particularly in resolving all sin into pride.‡

In a subject so arduous as Predestination, it is very easy to push men into difficulties. Our Author observes§ that some Frenchmen had objected to Augustine, that he had described men as predestinated not only to judgment but also to sin; from which charges the learned and holy Prosper defended the sentiments of the African prelate, whose death prevented any answer from himself. Prosper says, the unbelief of men is not generated from predestination; for God is the author of good, not of evil. Infidelity is not to be referred to the divine constitution, but only to the divine prescience.

With equal dexterity he defends the faith of the Trinity, in a book addressed to king Thrasamond. Let it suffice to mention one argument for the divinity of

* Book I. Ch. I.
‡ Ch. XVII.

† Ch. IV.
§ Ch. XXX.

the Holy Ghost, toward the close. "If he can quicken who is not God; if he can sanctify who is not God; if he can dwell in believers who is not God; if he can give grace who is not God, then the Holy Ghost may be denied to be God. If any creature can do those things, which are spoken of the Holy Ghost, then let the Holy Ghost be called a creature." In a treatise on the incarnation and grace of Jesus Christ* he answers the trite objection against divine election drawn from the words, "God would have all men to be saved," by showing that upon the views of those who see no mystery in the subject, but resolve the distinction into the merits or demerits of men, Almighty God ceases to be incomprehensible, as the Scripture describes him to be. He allows the great truth, that God would have all men to be saved, and yet there is a depth, not to be fathomed by man in the destruction of so many sinners. Much more might be quoted from this author, on subjects essentially connected with the Gospel of Christ. But the diffusiveness of the quotations from Augustine may supercede the necessity of enlarging on the views of one, who so closely followed his steps, and who wrote and lived with a similar spirit.

Besides several spectral treatises, we have also a few epistles of this saint. The fourth of Proba, concerning prayer, deserves to be carefully studied. It is an excellent sample of the humble piety of the African school. He instructs the lady in his favourite doctrine of grace connected with humility, and justly infers, that if a man as yet innocent could not remain so by his natural power, much less can this be expected from him now that he is in a state of so great depravity. He describes, in a pathetic manner, the snares arising from the craft of Satan, and the corrupt workings of the heart, declaring that though the Lord from time to time attends with aids during the sharp war, lest his people faint, yet our mortal nature is sufficed to be overloaded with the burden of corruption, that we may feel our helplessness, and have speedy recourse to divine grace. He describes the conflict between flesh and spirit; shows that it must last through life; that prayer and watching are ever necessary, and that a conceit of perfection would lead us

into deadly pride. He recommends a humble, contrite frame of spirit, not only for the beginning, but for the whole course of a Christian's progress, and concludes with a beautiful view of the perfect rest from sin which remains for him hereafter. It is refreshing to the mind, to see the real principles of Christianity appearing in great vigour and clearness in this little composition.

The epistle of Eusebius* on Charity, while it describes this greatest of Christian graces in a manner much resembling that of Augustine, demonstrates the benevolent spirit of the writer. In an epistle to Theodorus a Senator,† he congratulates him on his victory over the world. He had been, it seems, a Roman consul, and had given up secular pursuits through the love of heavenly things. Fulgentius strongly reminds him to whose grace alone he was indebted for the change, and recommends humility;‡ "a virtue which neither those have who love the world, nor those who profess to have renounced the world by their own strength." By which distribution of the unconverted into two sorts he points out the same division of men, which has ever taken place from the time of Christ. Pharisees and Sadducees were their names among the Jews; in the Gentile world the application of Stoic and Epicurean gave the same distinction. In the school of Augustine, lovers of the world formed one denomination, confident boasters in their own strength the other; and in our times the same difference is commonly marked by the terms worldly-minded and self-righteous; while in all ages the genuine religion of real humanity stands contra-distinguished from both these classes. Fulgentius recommends to Theodorus the constant study of the Scriptures. "If you come to them meek and humble, there you will find preventing grace, by which, when fallen, you may rise; accompanying grace, by which you may run the way of righteousness; and fol-

* Ep. 5.

† Ep. 6.

‡ The practice of Fulgentius agreed with his doctrine. About the end of the year 524 a bishop in an African council disputed preëminency with him.—The council decided for Fulgentius, who for that time requested in the authority of the council. But, observing how much the other was afflicted at the determination, at a future council he publicly desired that it must be reversed. His humility was admired, and his request was granted.

lowing grace, by which you may reach the heavenly kingdom."

In the epistle to Venantia concerning Repentance,* he steers in the middle course between presumption and despair, invites all men of every age to repent and be converted, under the confident expectation of acceptance with God through Jesus Christ, and mentions our Lord's parable of the different hours in which labourers are brought into the vineyard, as an argument that no time is fixed to deter the returning sinner. Jesus would not have come to save the lost in this last age of the world, if human wickedness was ever too strong for divine mercy and goodness. He observes, that the great defect of Judas in his repentance lay in this, that he had no faith in that blood which he had betrayed. He quotes pertinent scriptures, and, to comprehend in one nervous sentence the whole subject, he says, "A salutary conversion is twofold; it is when repentance leaves not him who hopes in the divine favour, nor hope deserts the penitent: and it is evidenced by this, if a man with his whole heart renounces his sin, and with his whole heart places his hope of forgiveness in God. For sometimes the devil takes away hope from the penitent, sometimes repentance from him who hopes. In the first place he overwhelms the man whom he tortures, in the second he throws him down when he sets at ease."—Hear his testimony to the mystery of the Gospel. "The only begotten God so loved human nature, that he not only freed it from the power of the devil, but also placed it at the right hand of the Father in himself above all good angels."

In his epistle concerning the baptism of a dyer's negro, who had given previous proofs of sincerity, while he was a catechumen, but in the time of baptism itself was senseless and incapable of professing his faith; he endeavours to alleviate the doubts of those who were afraid lest his incompetency should prevent his salvation. There are two points observable in this epistle, one is the custom of the church in presenting infants to baptism, the other is, that however rapid the progress of superstition had been in the time of Valentinian, yet the most destructive superstitions, and those which are directly subversive of Christian faith and purity, both in doctrine and practice, were as yet

unknown. He assigns as a reason for not baptizing the dead, that sins are irremissible after the separation of the soul from the body. He supports his opinion with the declaration of the Apostle, that we must be judged according to the things done in the body. Nothing can be more conclusive against the pernicious doctrine of purgatory.

I observe further that he uses the word "to justify" in the same sense in which Augustine does; nor does the true idea of the word seem to be recovered by the Christian world till the days of Luther.†

He speaks of the evils of the Pelagian heresy, and describes the strength and ability given to Augustine against it, and strongly recommends the writings of that father to the Christian world, as containing a more copious instruction of divine grace, than had been known some time before, though the doctrine itself, he contends, had ever been held in the Church.‡

CHAPTER II.

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN OTHER PARTS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE, TILL THE DEATH OF JUSTIN, INCLUDING THE LIFE OF CÆSARIUS.

In the beginning of this century, Alaric king of the Visigoths reigned at Toulouse, and was sovereign of a kingdom on the confines of France, and Spain, though afterwards, the Visigoths, by the victorious arms of the Franks, were confined to the latter country. Most of his subjects were of the general Church, and he himself was an Arian; yet he treated them with great humanity, and gave leave to the bishops of his kingdom to meet together at the city of Agde. Twenty-four bishops assembled, the president of whom was Casarius, bishop of Arles. They made a number of canons, relating to discipline, two or three particulars of which may be mentioned. "All clergymen who serve the church faithfully shall receive salaries proportionable to their services." This rule, so simple and general, was the ancient provision for the maintenance of pastors. But, by another canon of this council, clergymen are allowed, provided they have the bishop's leave, to reserve to themselves the

* Ep. 7.

† Ch. V.

• De Verit. Paul. B. I. C. XIV.

† Ibid. B. II. C. XVIII.

revenues of the Church,* saving its rights, but without the power of giving away or alienating any part; and here is the origin of benefices. "In all Churches the creed shall be explained to the competent; on the same day, a week before Easter. All such laymen as shall not receive the communion three times a year, at the three great festivals,† shall be looked on as heathens. Oratories may be allowed in the country to those who live at a great distance from the parish churches, for the ease and convenience of their families; but they must appear at their parish churches on certain solemn festivals." This last rule showed at once a regard for parochial order, and for the instruction of the people.§ The next is equally laudable: "Laymen are ordered to remain in the Church till the blessing is pronounced." Casarius was very zealous against the abuses meant to be rectified by this canon. He observed one day some persons going out of the Church to avoid hearing the sermon: "What are you about, my children?" cried he with a loud voice, "Where are you going? Stay, stay, for the good of your souls. At the day of judgment it will be too late to exhort you." This just and charitable zeal prevailed at length: but he was often obliged to cause the Church-doors to be shut, after the Gospel was read, to prevent the indecent practice. His people were however reclaimed, and they repented by degrees. There are still extant two of his sermons on this subject. Mankind in all ages are apt to be weary of God's word; there were however pastors in the western Church, who served for charity, and not for lucre. Another canon deserves to be mentioned. It forbade auguries, and divinations, and the opening of the Scriptures with a view to make an omen of the first words that offered. We have seen that Augustine had opposed this last mentioned superstition. Here it was forbidden under penalty of excommunication. Yet it still prevailed. I see the African schools, virtuously but unsuccessfully, struggling against the increasing darkness and superstition.

* Fleury, B. XXXI. l. Vol. IV.

† Who seem to have been those who applied for baptism.

‡ Christmas, Easter, and Whitsuntide.

§ The union of these two in just proportion gives a perfect idea of good discipline. It would be well if similar care were taken for many places in our own country, far distant from parish churches.

Casarius had spent some part of his youth in the famous monastery of Lérins.* Hearing afterwards that he was actually designed to be made bishop of Arles, he hid himself among the tombs. But he was taken out thence, at the age of thirty, was appointed bishop, and continued in that Church above forty years. He delighted in singing, and as he found the laity were apt to talk in the Church while the clergy were singing, he induced the laity to join with them in psalmody; and, in a sermon still extant, he exhorts them to sing with their hearts, as well as their voices. In another sermon he exhorts them to throw off all distracting thoughts, before they prostrate themselves for prayer. "Whoever," says he, "in his prayers, thinks on a public place of resort, or the house he is building, workshops that place or that house." He directs them also not to be content with hearing the Scriptures read in the Church, but to read them also at home.

This holy man gave himself entirely to reading and preaching. He preached on all Sundays and holidays. If he was himself hindered from preaching, he caused his own sermons, or those of Augustine, whom he highly revered, or those of Ambrose, to be read by other ministers. His style was plain, and adapted to common capacities. He entered into practical particulars, searched the consciences of his hearers, and severely reproved idolatrous and superstitious usages.

He was once, by calumny, ejected from his Church; but Alarie, his sovereign, on the discovery of his innocence, restored him. He was exposed to similar sufferings afterwards; but was again delivered, and amidst the confusions of the times distinguished himself exceedingly by acts of mercy. He died in the year 542, universally lamented. A. D. 542.

In the mean time the cause of Arianism was gradually declining, partly by the progress of the Franks, and partly by the influence of Sigismund, king of Burgundy, who succeeded his father Gondobaud, having been brought over to orthodoxy by Avitus, bishop of Vienne, a year before.

* This little island, which we have had repeated occasion to mention, is now called St. Honorat, is close to the French coast, and lies between Nice and Toulon.

Sigismund, king of the Burgundians, having been induced, by the calumny of his second wife, to put to death his son Sigisbert, and finding afterwards his error, repented in great bitterness, and besought

God to punish him in this life. Sigismund and not in the next. His prayer seems to have been

heard; for, in the year 523, he was attacked by Clodomir, king of the Franks, the successor of Clovis, and was afterwards slain with his wife and children. Clodomir himself was soon after slain in Burgundy, and his three sons were brought up by Clotilda, the widow of Clovis, their grandmother.

Such was the state of the Church of Christ in France during the former part of this century. In Italy, some degree of genuine piety may be presumed to have still existed, though I have no interesting particulars to record. If we turn our eyes to the East, the prospect is far more disagreeable. Factions and feuds, heretical perversions and scandalous enmities fill up the scene. Under the emperor Justin, Christianity began at length to wear a more agreeable aspect in some respects, and peace and good order, in external things at least, were in a measure restored. In the year 529, Zammaces, king of the Lazi, a people who inhabited the country anciently called

Zathia comes to Constantinople,

A. D. 522.

Colchis, being dead, his son Zathes repaired to Constantinople, telling the emperor that he was desirous of recovering the Gospel, and of re-establishing the idolatry of his ancestors. They had been vassals to the king of Persia, and had been obliged to perform sacrifices after the Persian mode. He put himself therefore under the protection of Justin, and desired to receive the crown from his hands. Justin granted his requests, and thus the Lazi became vassals to the Eastern Empire, and embraced Christianity. The Eorians, who bordered on their territories, and were also subjects to the king of Persia, had already received the Gospel. How far any thing of the real spirit of Christ's religion was imbibed by either nation, I know not. I can only say, the limits of the Christian name were extended in the East.*

In Arabia Felix there were many

Christians subject to a king* called Dounouas, a Jew, who caused those who were unwilling to become Jews to be cast into pits full of fire. In

the year 522 he besieged Ne- Cruelty of Dounouas, A. D. 522.

gra, a town inhabited by Christians. Having persuaded them to surrender by capitulation, he broke his oath, burnt the pastors, and beheaded the laymen, and carried all the youth into captivity. Here then the real church of Christ may be traced by sufferings voluntarily undergone for his sake. The next year, Elesbaan, king of Abyssinia, a country which, as we have formerly seen, had been Christian since the days of Athanasius, supported by the emperor Justin, invaded the territories of the Arabian Jew, subdued his country and slew him. Thus the Arabian Christians were relieved. Elesbaan himself was very zealous, and gave this proof of his zeal, that he resigned his crown to embrace the monastic life.

CHAPTER III.

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH DURING THE REIGN OF JUSTINIAN.

On the death of Justin, surnamed the Thracian, his nephew Justinian succeeded at Constantinople in the year 527. He was then forty-five years old, and reigned thirty-nine.

I scarcely know any prince, whose real and ostensible character were so different. If one judge by external things, he may appear one of the wisest, the most

Justinian becomes emperor, A. D. 527.

pious, and the most prosperous of men. He reunited Africa and Italy to the Roman empire; he is to this day famous for his code of laws; he was temperate and abstemious in private life, and was incessantly employed in religious acts and ceremonies; he honoured monks and persons reputed holy, built sumptuous

* Bruce, in his Travels into Abyssinia, toward the latter end of the 1st vol. calls this king Philnus, who, he says, threw Christians into pits of fire, particularly a priestess Hawaryat, signifying the Transgressor, with twenty of his companions. The king of Abyssinia, who fought against the Jews, he calls Calah. His story, as collected from Abyssinian and Arabian annals, is the same; and still corresponds, in this instance, with the Greek history, gives some testimony to the authenticity of the materials of Bruce's Abyssinian history.

tuous churches, endowed monasteries, was liberal beyond measure in the support of the externals of religion, was incessant in the encouragement of orthodoxy, at least of that which to him appeared to be so; indefatigable through the course of a long life in public affairs; seems scarcely to have ever unbended himself in any recreations, spent much time in religious speculations, rooted out idolatry from its obscure corners, and brought over a number of barbarous kings and nations to the profession of Christianity. What a character, if his heart had been right! His understanding and capacity indeed have been called in question; but I think unjustly. No weak man could have done half of what he did. He must have been a person of superior talents, and of very vigorous and strong faculties. But so far as appears from his conduct, he was, in religion, altogether the slave of superstition, in morality the slave of avarice. For gold he sold his whole empire to those who governed the provinces, to the collectors of tributes, and to those who are wont to frame plots against men under any pretences. He encouraged the vilest characters in their detestable and infamous calumnies, in order to partake of their gains. He did also innumerable pious actions, says Evagrius,* and such as are well pleasing to God, provided the doers perform them with such goods as their own property, and offer their pure actions, as a sacrifice, to God. In this emperor then it may be seen more eminently what a poor thing the body of christian religion is without the spirit. Whatever benefit the church might, in some cases, derive from his administration, particularly in what relates to the extension of its pale, this is to be ascribed to the adorable Providence of God bringing good out of evil. On the other hand the evil he wrought was palpable. Dissensions and schisms, forced conversions attended with cruelties, which alienated men's minds still more from godliness, the growth of superstition and formality, the miserable declension of real internal godliness,—especially through the East, where his influence was most extensive,—and the increase of igno-

rance and practical wickedness, were the undoubted consequences of Justinian's schemes.

In truth this man attempted too much: he pressed uniformity of doctrine through the world by imperial menaces and arms: he laboured to bring all nations into a nominal attachment to Christianity: he prescribed what bishops and laity should believe, and was himself, in effect, the pope as well as the emperor of the Roman world; yet, wretched being! he seems not to have known any one thing in religion in a right manner. In external things he could not but sometimes be right, in internal religion it was hardly possible he should be so; for he was ignorant of his own heart, while his eyes and ears with insatiable curiosity were intent on all persons and objects. It will not be pertinent to the design of this history to enter into a detail of the actions of such a prince; but the view of his character, which I think is supported by the concurrent testimony of civil and ecclesiastical historians, may teach persons of eminence, either in power, or learning, or genius, who shall give their minds to religious objects, to be in the first place more concerned for their own genuine conversion, and for personal godliness;* and then to contract and limit their plans within the humble circle that belongs to a fallible, confined, and short-lived creature like man; and steadily to move within that circle in the propagation and support of the Gospel of Christ, and of whatever is virtuous and praiseworthy, without being seduced by romantic and dazzling schemes to attempt what is vastly above their reach; for by this method they may be the victims of their own ambition or avarice, while they think they serve God, and may fill the world with evil, while they vainly suppose they are its benefactors. But these are ideas with which the profane and the careless governor has no right to meddle:

* Ch. XXX. B. IV. Evagrius Scholasticus. His ecclesiastical history takes us up, just after we are deserted by Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret, the tripartite historians of the same period: and in future I must make some use of him, though in historical merit far inferior to the three former.

* Nothing shows in a stronger light the emptiness of his mind than his boasting after he had finished the magnificent Church of St. Sophia. "I have excelled thee, Solomon!" Yet was this vain emperor made use of by Divine Providence as a shield to support external Christianity at least in the world. In his time Chosroes king of Persia persecuted the Christians in his dominions with extreme cruelty, and publicly declared that he would wage war not only with Justinian, but also with the God of the Christians. The military measures and the religious zeal of Justinian however checked the progress of his ferocity.

Justinian was neither the one nor the other. He was in earnest through life, though void of haughtiness, faith and charity; and for serious spirits, the caution, which his character is calculated to give, will stand as instructive lesson.

In his first year he made laws relating to bishops: a few words of them will deserve to have a place in this history. "The absence of bishops,"* says he, is the reason that divine service is so negligently performed; that the affairs of the Churches are not so well taken care of, and that the ecclesiastical revenues are employed in the expenses of their journeys, and of their residence in this city, Constantinople, with the clergy and domestics who accompany them.—Let no bishops quit their churches to come to this city, without an order from us, whatever may happen.—If we find their presence to be necessary here, we will send for them." What motives induced bishops to attend the courts so much, is easy to guess; and we have here a plain description how much the Eastern Church was secularized, and how it gradually ripened into a fitness for dissolving judgments.

Justinian says further, when an episcopal see becomes vacant, the inhabitants of the city shall declare in favour of three persons, whose faith and manners shall be testified by witnesses, that the most worthy may be chosen. He proceeds to lay down rules to restrain the avarice of bishops; rules, which had no existence in purer times, because a purer spirit prevailed.

In the year 529, a council, memorable for its evangelical spirit, was held at Council of Orange in France. Caesarius of Orange was its head. He had, as I

A. D. 529. observed,† tasted the doctrine of Augustine concerning grace, and was therefore zealous for its propagation. We may reasonably suppose the assembly of this council to have been formed in opposition to the attempts made in France in favour of Semi-Pelagianism, as well as to give testimony to the grace of the Gospel.—Thirteen bishops were present, and we have a pleasing spectacle of the work of the Divine Spirit flourishing to a considerable degree in France, particularly in the parts about Orange, and in the vicinity of the Rhone. "Adam's sin," says the council,‡ "did not only hurt the body, but the soul; it descended

to his posterity; the grace of God is not given to men because they call upon him, but that grace is the cause that men do call upon him: the being cleansed from sin, and the beginning of our faith, is not owing to ourselves, but to grace. We are not able by our own natural strength to do or think any thing which may conduce to our salvation. We believe that Abel, Noah, Abraham, and the other fathers, had not by nature that faith that St. Paul commendeth in them, but by grace." To clear the Almighty of being the author of sin, they add however, "that some may be predestinated to evil, we not only disbelieve, but detest those who think so."

These words express in substance the sentiments of these holy men. But to enable the reader to judge more precisely for himself what they were, I shall give him two passages from the fifth and seventh canons, translated at length from the Latin original. "If any one say, that the beginning or increase of faith, and the very affection of belief is in us, not by the gift of grace, that is, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit correcting our will from infidelity to faith, from impiety to piety, but, by nature, he is an enemy to the doctrine of the Apostles." "If any man affirm, that he can, by the vigour of nature, think any thing good which pertains to salvation as he ought, or choose, or consent to the saving, that is to evangelical, preaching, without the illumination and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who gives to all the sweet relish in consenting to and believing the truth, he is deceived by an heretical spirit."

I have been solicitous to preserve faithfulness to the original in this short abstract. Doubtless the sweet relish they speak of is no other than that ineffable delight in the perception and obedience of the Gospel, which characterizes the godly in all ages, subjects them, though unjustly, to the charge of enthusiasm, and produces real practical Christianity. In every effusion of the Spirit of God it always appears in rich exuberance, and is as distinct from formal or even merely theoretical views of religion, as the substance is from the shadow. I look on it as a remarkable fact, that so plain a testimony to vital religion should be given in the South of France in the sixth century, when the Christian world was every where so overspread with darkness. It seems that in this part of France at least,

* Fleury, B. XXXII. 10.
Vol. I.

† Ib. 12.

Semi-Pelagianism had been checked : indeed, as several espousers of it were real good men, it is not to be wondered at, that by further experience and attention they might be led to embrace in system what in their own sensations they must have known to be true, namely, that man, by nature, is lost and helpless in sin, and that grace only can revive him. **Cæsarius, of Arles, was in all probability highly instrumental in producing this change of sentiment; for we should recollect, that Hilary, of Arles, had been a Semi-Pelagian. I should rejoice to be able to gratify the spiritual reader with the account of the lives, labours, and works of these thirteen bishops of France, which were probably useful and edifying. But my records say no more; and this is one of the thousand cases in which I have occasion to regret, how little of real Church-history has been written, how much of ecclesiastical perversions and abuses.**

In the same year a council was held also at Vaison,* at which were present twelve bishops, of whom Cæsarius was one. They decreed, according to the custom observed in Italy, that all country priests should receive into their houses young men, who might be readers in the Church, that they should educate them with a paternal regard, causing them to learn the Psalms, to read the Scriptures, and to be acquainted with the word of God; and in this way should provide themselves with worthy successors.† For the convenience of the people, the pastors were allowed to preach not only in the cities, but in all the country parishes.

About this time the monastic rules of Benedict were established, which afterwards were received through the western Churches. They are full of forms, and breathe little of the spirit of godliness. The very best thing that I can find recorded of the superstitious founder, is the zeal with which he opposed idolatry. In that part of Italy, where the Samnites formerly dwelt, the worship of Apollo

had been still continued. He eradicated this idolatry, and instructed the peasants in Christianity.

In a council held at Clermont,* in the year 535, I see canonical methods were still used to prevent the interference of secular power in the appointment of bishops. "To correct the abuse of obtaining bishoprics by the favour of princes, it is decreed, that he who is a candidate for a bishopric shall be ordained by the election of the clergy and citizens, and the consent of the metropolitan, without making use of the protection of persons in power. Otherwise the candidate shall be deprived of the communion of the Church, which he is desirous of governing."

Council of
Clermont,
A. D. 535.

Hilderic, king of the Vandals in Africa, having been deposed by Gilimer, Justinian, by his renowned general Belisarius, recovered the country from the Barbarians, and reunited it to the empire. This put an end to the dominion of Arianism in that region. The orthodox were reinstated; two hundred and seventeen bishops held a council at Carthage; Arians and Donatists were forbidden to hold assemblies, and the lands which had been taken from the Arians were restored by an edict of Justinian in the year 535. The face of true religion was recovered in this country; its spirit I cannot find. The best symptom was the extension of Christianity among the Moors, by the zealous care of Justinian. How far any cordial change took place among them does not appear.

Justinian
restores to
the Arians
their
lands,
A. D. 535.

In the year 536, Belisarius, the hero of this age, took Rome from the Goths, though some time elapsed after this event before the Gothic power was annihilated in Italy. But what has this our history to do with his triumphs? His master showed much zeal for religion, though ill directed; and what is worse, not principled with the genuine fear of God. The General scarcely seemed to profess any religion at all; and the most remarkable ecclesiastical transaction in which he was concerned is sufficient to brand his name with eternal infamy. A very brief view of it shall suffice.† The-

Belisarius
takes
Rome,
A. D. 536.

* Fleury, B. xxxii. 12.

† This is quite consonant to the ancient method of educating men for the pastoral offices, and supplied the want of ecclesiastical seminaries. While so much attention was paid to education and the word of God, there is reason to believe that the doctrines of the Gospel must have been taught with some success in France.

* Fleury, B. xxxii. 44.

† Fleury, B. xxxii. 57.

odora, the empress, gave an order to Vigilinus, deacon of the Roman Church, to require Belisarius to secure his election to the bishopric of Rome, and the expulsion of Silverius, at that time bishop. Vigilinus was in that case to present Belisarius with two hundred pounds of gold. The vengeful General executed the order on the infamous conditions, and delivered Silverius into the hands of Vigilinus, who sent him into the island of Palmaria, where he died of hunger.* It was worth while just to mention this villany, that, if any persons have been seduced into an admiration of the character of Belisarius on account of his military prowess, they may see how much splendour of false virtue may exist in a man who is altogether void of the fear of God.

Justinian, though at first he seemed to take some pains to correct the consequences of this scandalous transaction of his wife, of his General, and of the unprincipled bishop of Rome, at length suffered the whole scheme to stand. Still he persisted to meddle in religious controversies, and issued an edict for the condemnation of Origen's error.

In the year 542, a council held at Orleans ordered, that if any person desired to have a parish church erected on his estate,† he should first be obliged to endow it, and to find an incumbent. Hence the origin of patronages.

In the year 555 died Vigilinus, bishop of Rome, after having governed eighteen years in the see which he had so iniquitously obtained. Selfish

Death of Vigilinus, A. D. 555.

duplicitly marked his character more eminently than that of any Roman bishop before him. But he paid dear for his intrigues and dissimulation. Justinian, who had the ambition of acting as an infallible judge of controversies himself, suffered not Vigilinus to be the pope of the Church. On the contrary, a little before his death, he was, though very reluctant, compelled by the emperor to consent to the decrees of a council held at Constantinople;‡

which, by the influence of Justinian, condemned the writings called the Three Chapters; that is, three books, or passages of books, one of which was the work of the pious Theodoret of Cyprus. The controversy itself was idle and frivolous; yet, how many pages of Church-history, so called, does it fill! But I can find no vestige of piety in the whole transaction. "Therefore eternal silence be its doom."

Several western bishops, because they refused to condemn the three chapters, were banished by the order of Justinian. What advantage was it to the Church, that Italy and Africa were recovered to nominal orthodoxy, and to the Roman empire, when she was thus oppressed by her pretended protector!

Justinian, in his old age, fell into the notion, that the body of Jesus Christ was incorruptible. Having once formed the sentiment, he drew up an edict, and, in his usual manner, required his subjects to embrace it. Eutychius, bishop of Constantinople, had the honesty to refuse the publication of it. "This, said he, is not the doctrine of the Apostles. It would follow from thence that the incarnation was only in fancy. How could an incorruptible body have been nourished by the milk of its mother? How was it possible for it, when on the cross, to be pierced by the nails, or the lance? It cannot be called incorruptible in any other sense, than as it was always unpolluted with any sinful defilement, and was not corrupted in the grave."

But the imperial mandate was stronger than the arguments of the bishop, however reasonable. He was roughly treated, was banished from his see, and died in exile: he acted however uprightly, and seems from his integrity to have been a Christian indeed. Anastasius, bishop of Antioch, resisted also with much firmness; he was a person of exemplary piety, whom Justinian in vain endeavoured to gain over to his sentiments. As he knew the emperor intended to banish him, he wrote a farewell discourse to his people. He took pains to confirm the minds of men in just ideas of the human nature of Christ, and daily recited in the Church that saying of the Apostle: "If any man preach to you any other Gospel than that which ye have received, let him be accursed."§ The example of a truly holy

* So Liberatus in his Breviary; but Procopius, a living witness, says, that he was murdered at the instigation of Antiochia, the wife of Belisarius, by Eugenia, a woman devoted to her.

† Fleury, B. xxiii. 15.

‡ This was the fifth general council, or the second of Constantinople, A. D. 553, and 27th year of Justinian.

• Gal. i.—Evagrius, B. IV. toward the end.

and upright person supporting a just cause is very prevalent. Most around him were induced to imitate. An opinion directly subversive of the real sufferings of Christ, on which the efficacy of his atonement depends, appeared altogether unchristian. But God had provided better things for us, says Evagrius. While the old imperial pope was dictating the sentence of banishment against Anastasius and other prelates, he was smitten with the stroke of death. Let not profane persons exult over him; but let those who exercise their thoughts on religion, take care to study the written word with humility, prayer, and pious reverence, warned by the apostasy of a man, who for many years had studied divinity, and fell at last into an error, equally subversive of the dictates of common sense, and of Christian piety, and diametrically opposite to all Scripture: let us remember, however, that his follies and persecutions were the occasion of exhibiting some excellent characters even in the eastern Church, who showed that they bore not the Christian name without a just title to that best of all appellations.

CHAPTER IV.

MISCELLANEOUS AFFAIRS TO THE END OF THE CENTURY.

JUSTIN, the nephew of Justinian, succeeded.* He recalled the bishops whom the late emperor had exiled, Eutychius, of Constantinople, alone excepted. The reason of this exception I cannot learn; but, after the decease of John, his successor, who held the see twelve years, Justin was prevailed on to restore Eutychius, who continued bishop of Constantinople till his death. His integrity and piety should scarcely be doubted after the long course of suffering which he sustained on account of the faith of Jesus. But, in his old age he embraced a whimsical notion, that our bodies after the resurrection become thinner than air. A notion which it would not have been worth while to have mentioned at all on its own account: but it is a specimen of the low state of Christian knowledge in the East, and of the predominancy of Origenism and Platonism, which had never been exterminated in Asia, since

they had gained admission into the Church. For the opinion, though not so fundamentally erroneous as that of Justinian, originated from the same fanciful school: and we may see what a blessing it was to the West to have been instructed in the Christian doctrines of grace through Augustine, whence the purity and simplicity of the faith was preserved in a much superior manner, and fantastic notions could not so easily be received among them.†

A number of Britons having been expelled from their country by the arms of the Anglo-Saxons, who had entered the island in the year 446, crossed the sea and settled in the adjacent parts of France.—
Hence the origin of the French province of Brittany. With them the faith of the Gospel was preserved, as well as with their brethren in Wales and Cornwall, and some parts of Scotland and Ireland, while the major part of England was covered with Saxon idolatry. Sampson, originally a Welshman, left his own country and came into Brittany. This man founded a monastery at Dol, and was bishop of Dol himself some years. He died about the year 565, and was renowned for piety and learning in his day. He had been educated in his native country by Heltut, who was said to have been the disciple of Germanus, of Auxerre. Thus the seed sown in our island by that holy person brought forth fruit; and it is only to be regretted that the accounts of these things are so slight and scanty. About the same time died St. Malo, who, to prevent his being appointed bishop of Winchester, forsook our island, and fled to the coast of France. To the west of Brittany there was an island called Aletha, now called St. Malo's, the greatest part of the inhabitants of which were Pagans. At the desire of the few Christians who were there, Malo laboured among them till most of the inhabitants received the Gospel, and persuaded him to reside among them as their bishop, which he did till his death.† Other British bishops are celebrated, who in the same age were distinguished for their piety and useful labours in Brittany.

Origin of
Britanny,

A. D. 446.

Death of
the Bishop
of Dol,

A. D. 565.

* Evagrius, V. C. 3.

† Eutychius, however, before he died, retracted his error.

† Fleury, B. XXXIV. 14.

Gildas, surnamed the Wise, another disciple of Holm, was born at Dumbarton, in Scotland; he preached with much success, in the best sense, so far as appears, in his native country and in Ireland. He afterwards came over into Brittany, and built the monastery of Buz, which is still called by his name, says my author. Two of his discourses on the ruin of Great Britain are still extant, in which he deploras the vices and calamities of the times, and, ascribing the desolations made by the Saxons to the depravity of his countrymen, he with honest vehemence exhorts six British princes to repentance. He addresses with much spirit the clergy of Great Britain, and rebukes them for their ignorance, avarice, and simony.

From these hints, in conjunction with what has been elsewhere related, these things are evident; namely, that there had been a considerable degree of pure religion among our ancestors before the invasion of the Saxons; that even after the declension and decay, there were still faithful pastors, who carried back into France that spirit of godliness which the latter country, by the means of Germans of Auxerre, had brought over into our island; and that the poison of Pelagianism must have had a considerable influence in the production of that national decay of piety which Gildas so feelingly deploras.

Colomban, an Irish priest in this century, came over into the northern parts of Scotland, and laboured with much success among the Picts.* The southern parts of Scotland had been evangelized long before by the instruction of Ninias, a British bishop, who had himself been instructed at Rome. Colomban lived thirty-four years after his passage into Britain. His disciples were remarkable for the holiness and abstemiousness of their lives. Thus, while the Gospel was rapidly withdrawing from the East, where it first arose, God left not himself without witness in the most distant parts of the West.

Radevunda, daughter of Bertharius, king of Thuringia, having been taken captive by the Franks in her infancy, fell

to the lot of king Clotaire, who married her. This woman might have been added to the list of those pious persons of her sex, who were made highly instrumental in instructing mankind, had she not imbibed monastic ideas, the pest which infected godly persons, in general, in these times, and which, though it could not ruin their relation to God, cut off the greatest part of their usefulness. She obtained a separation from her husband, and followed the monastic rules with great austerity to her death. These rules were now grown stricter than ever; the vows were made perpetual, and this godly queen, who might have caused her light to shine in a blessed manner in the world, was shut up during the remainder of her life in a nunnery.

Toward the latter end of this century, the Lombards came from Pannonia into Italy, and settled there under Alboinus, their first king. They fixed their metropolis at Pavia. As they were Arians by profession, heresy again took root in Italy, whose inhabitants felt all the horrors and miseries which a savage and victorious nation could inflict. But the Church needed the scourge; the Roman See had been dreadfully corrupt under Vigilius, and formal superstition was corroding the vitals of genuine godliness.

At the same time John Climachus flourished, who was abbot of the monastery of Mount Sinai, in Arabia, near to which was a little monastery, called the Prison, in which all who had committed any great crime, since they entered on the monastic state, voluntarily confined themselves. The account which Climachus gives of it is striking. The poor prisoners spent their time in prayer, with every possible external mark of self-denial and wretchedness. They did not allow themselves any one comfort of human life. In their prayers they did not dare to ask to be delivered entirely from punishment; they only begged not to be punished with the utmost rigour. The voluntary torments they endured were amazing, and this voluntary humility of theirs continued till death. But I turn from the disagreeable scene to make one remark:

How precious is the light of the Gospel! How gladly, we may suppose, would many of these miserable persons have received the doctrine of free forgiveness by faith in the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, if it had been faithfully preached

* Probably they were originally Britons who fled into Scotland from the arms of the Saxons, and were called Picts, because they painted their bodies, according to the custom of our barbarous ancestors.

among them! How does their seriousness rebuke the levity of presumptuous sinners among ourselves, who trifle with the light! how deeply fallen was the East from the real genius of Christianity, when men distressed for sin could find no hope but in their own formalities and rigid austerities!

In the year 584, *Levigildus*, king of the Visigoths in Spain, having married his eldest son *Hermenigildus*, to *Ingonda*, daughter of the French king, began to find effects from the marriage which he little expected. *Ingonda*, though persecuted by her mother-in-law, the wife of the Spanish monarch, persevered in orthodoxy, and, by the assistance of *Leander*, bishop of Seville, under the influence of divine grace, brought over her husband to the faith.

The father, enraged, commenced a grievous persecution against the orthodox in his dominions. *Hermenigildus* was led into the grievous error of rebelling against his father, not through ambition, it seems, but through fear of his father, who appeared to be bent on his destruction. Being obliged to fly into a church, he was induced by his father's promises to surrender himself. *Levigildus* at first treated him with kindness, but afterwards banished him to *Valentia*. His wife *Ingonda* flying to the Grecian emperor, died by the way. Sometime after, the young prince, loaded with irons, had leisure to learn the vanity of earthly greatness, and exhibited every mark of piety and humility. His father sent to him an Arian bishop, offering him his favour, if he would receive the communion at his hands. *Hermenigildus* continued firm in the faith, and the king enraged, sent officers, who dispatched him. The father lived however to repent of his cruelty; and the young prince, notwithstanding the unjustifiable step into which his passions had betrayed him, had lived long enough to give a shining example of Christian piety. *Levigildus*, before he died, desired *Leander*, bishop of Seville, whom he had much persecuted, to educate his second son *Recaredus** in the same principles in which he had instructed his eldest. *Recaredus* succeeded his father in the government, and embraced orthodoxy with much zeal, the consequence was the establishment of orthodoxy in Spain, and the destruction of Arianism,

which had now no legal settlement in the world, except with the Lombards in Italy. Though this account be general and external, it seemed proper to give it, as an illustrious instance of the work of Divine Providence, effecting by the means of a pious princess a very salutary revolution in religion.

I have collected in this chapter the few events which appeared worthy of notice from the death of *Justinian* to the end of this century, with a studied exclusion of the concerns of *Gregory* the first, bishop of Rome. He is a character deserving to be exhibited distinctly. And in connexion with his affairs, whatever else has been omitted, which falls within our plan, may be introduced in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V.

GREGORY THE FIRST, BISHOP OF ROME. HIS PASTORAL LABOURS.

He was a Roman by birth, and of a noble family. But being religiously disposed, he assumed the monastic habit, and was eminently distinguished by the progress he made in piety.* It was not till after he was drawn back, in a degree, to a secular life, by his employments in the Church, that he became thoroughly sensible what advantage he had enjoyed for his own soul from religious retirement. With tears he owned that he had had the world under his feet while he was absorbed in heavenly contemplation; but was now bereft of comfort. "Now," says he, "my mind, by reason of pastoral cares, is oppressed with the business of secular persons, and after so fair an appearance of rest, is defiled with the dust of earthly action. And suffering itself to be distracted by outward things in condescension to many, even while it desires inward things, it returns to them, without doubt, more faintly. I weigh, therefore, what I endure: I weigh what I have lost, and while I look at that which

* Bude *Eccles. Hist.* B. II. C. I.—It should be observed here, that before this he had studied the Roman jurisprudence, was eminent in that and every other fashionable secular kind of knowledge, had been distinguished as a senator, and promoted by *Justin II.* to the government of the city of Rome, an arduous and important office, which he had discharged with singular prudence, fidelity, and justice.

* *Gregory of Tours*, B. VIII. C. ult.

I have lost, my present burdens are more heavy."

In truth, in different periods of his life he moved in opposite extremes. He was one while dormant in the quietism of solitude; another while, involved in the multiplicity of episcopal cares at Rome. If his lot had been cast in the earlier and purer days of Christianity, he would neither have been a monk, nor a bishop charged with such extensive secular concerns, and so would have avoided the evils of which he complains. The great Sces in these times, that of Rome in particular, through the increasing growth of spiritual domination, and the load of worldly business very improperly connected with it, worldly, though in some sense ecclesiastical, were indeed agreeable enough to minds like that of Vigilius, earthly and ambitious, but were fatiguing beyond measure to men like Gregory, who unfeignedly loved heavenly things. Nothing could be more unwise than the custom which prevailed of encouraging monachism and very large episcopal governments at the same time. The transition from the one to the other, as in Gregory's case (and it was a common one,) must to holy minds, like his, have been a trial of no small magnitude. The serious complaints, however, which Gregory made of this trial during the whole scene of his bishopric, proceeded from the spirituality of his affections; and all, who have enjoyed in private the sweets of communion with God, and have found how difficult it is, in the hurry of business, to preserve a degree of the same spirit, will sympathize with him. A mediocrity, and a mixture of employment and retirement is, doubtless, the best situation for religious improvement.

Being drawn from his monastery, and ordained to the ministry, he was sent from Rome to Constantinople, to transact ecclesiastical affairs. Here he became acquainted with Leander, afterwards bishop of Seville, the same person that we have spoken of in the relation of the affairs of Spain. Leander and he found in each other a similarity of taste and spirit; Gregory opened his heart to him: "I found my soul," says he, "convinced of the necessity of securing salvation; but I delayed too long, entangled with the world. At length I threw myself into a monastery; now I thought I had placed an insuperable bar between myself and the world. But again I am tossed on the tempestu-

ous ocean, and unless I may enjoy the communion of my brethren, I can find no solace to my soul."*

He had, however, taken with him some of the brethren of his monastery, and with them had enjoyed the benefit of Christian discourse, and of searching the Scriptures. Here, also, through their exhortation, he began his long commentary on the book of Job, which he finished in his episcopacy.† His residence at Constantinople was not without, at least, some use to the church. By his arguments and influence he quashed the fanciful notion of the archbishop Eutychius, already mentioned, concerning the qualities of the human body after the resurrection. Had it not been for the timely and vigorous opposition of a man so respectable as Gregory was for knowledge and piety, the notion might have continued, with many, to the disgrace of Christianity at this day. The emperor Tiberius, who had succeeded Justin, supported the labours of Gregory with his authority.

Gregory, even from his youth, was afflicted with frequent complaints in his stomach and bowels; and by his own account in his letters, he appears to have suffered much in his body all his days. The vigour of his mind however was not depressed, and perhaps few men ever profited more than he did by such chastisements. His labours, both as a pastor and an author, were continued, and in all probability, received peculiar unction from his afflictions.

After his return to Rome,‡ there was so great an inundation of the Tiber, that it flowed upon the walls of the city, and threw down many monuments and ancient structures.§ The granaries of the church were overflowed, by which a prodigious quantity of wheat was lost. Presently after, an infectious distemper invaded the city. Pelagius the bishop fell a victim to it among the first. The destruction prevailed, and many houses were left without an inhabitant. In this distress, the people were anxious to choose a bishop in the room of the deceased Pelagius, and by unanimous consent the election fell upon Gregory. He, with that humility which formed invari-

* Gregor. Pref. to Job, C. I.

† Bede.

‡ Vita Gregor. Inscr. autor.

§ These inundations of the Tiber were not uncommon. The classical reader will recollect in Horace, Ode II. Lib. I.

Irre dejectum monumenta regis, &c.

bly a striking feature of his character, earnestly refused, and loudly proclaimed his own unworthiness. He did more; he wrote to Mauritius, the successor of Tiberius, beseeching him to withhold his assent.* Germanus, the Governor of Constantinople, intercepting the messenger, and opening the letter of Gregory, informed Mauritius of the election. The emperor confirmed it with pleasure. In the mean time the plague continued to make dreadful havoc; and Gregory, however backward to receive the office of a bishop, forgot not the duties of a pastor. A part of his sermon on this occasion may give us some idea of the best preaching of those times; for I know none in those days which is superior, and but little which is equal, to that of Gregory.

"Beloved brethren, we ought to have feared the scourge of God before it came; at least, after having felt it, let us tremble. Let grief open to us the passages of conversion; and let the punishment, which we feel, dissolve the hardness of our hearts. For, to use the prophet's language, 'the sword hath come even into the soul.' Our people, behold, are smitten with a weapon of divine indignation, and each is carried off by the rapid devastation. Languor does not precede death, but death itself with hasty strides, as you see, outstrips the tardy course of languor. Every person, who is smitten, is carried off, before he has opportunity to bewail his sins. Conceive in what state that man will appear before his Judge, who is hurried off in the midst of his sins.—Let each of us repent while we have time to weep, before the sword devour us.—Let us call our ways to remembrance.—Let us come before his face with confession, and lift up our hearts with our hands to the Lord.—Truly he gives to our trembling hearts a confidence, who proclaims by the prophet, 'I would not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live.' Let none despair on account of the greatness

of his crimes. Think how the inveterate evils of the Ninevites were wiped off by three days repentance;† and that the converted robber in the very article of death obtained the rewards of life. Let us change our hearts, and encourage ourselves before hand with the thought that we have obtained what we ask.—Importunity, so disagreeable to man, is well pleasing to the Judge of truth; because the good and merciful Lord loves to be overcome by prayers.—Remember the Psalmist: 'Call upon me in the time of trouble; so will I hear thee, and thou shalt praise me.' He admonishes us to call upon his name, and witnesses by this his readiness to forgive."

Gregory concluded his discourse with appointing a litany‡ to be performed by seven companies, who were to march at break of day from different churches, and to meet at one place. The first company consisted of the clergy; the second, of abbots with their monks; the third, of abbesses with their nuns; the fourth, of children; the fifth, of laymen; the sixth, of widows; the seventh, of married women. Fourscore persons in one hour, while the people were supplicating in the litany, died of the plague. Gregory, however, persisted in praying and preaching till the plague ceased.

He was all this time as eager to avoid the honour of the episcopal office, as he was to discharge the duty of it. The gates were watched, and his flight was prevented for a time. But he found means to be conveyed in a wicker basket out of the city, and concealed himself three days. The zealous search of the people discovered him at length, and he was obliged to enter upon his bishopric. This happened in the year 590.

Gregory continued to discharge the office in the same spirit, in which he began it. Other bishops had been sedulous to adorn churches with gold or silver; he gave himself wholly, so far as he could, to the care of souls.† The melan-

Gregory the Great made bishop of Rome against his inclination,

A. D. 590.

Christian spirit of Gregory.

* The assent of the emperor to the election of a bishop of Rome appears plainly to have been necessary by the custom of those times. But the total exclusion of the people from all concern in these appointments had not yet obtained. It is obvious to be noticed also, how dependent the bishop of Rome was on the emperor. Antichrist had not yet formally begun his reign, nor would have been known at Rome to this day, had all the Bishops resembled Gregory.

• I translate faithfully; the expression marks the want of evangelical accuracy in Gregory, though not surely the want of evangelical humility. It is not to be imagined that he considered repentance as a proper atonement for sin.

† The word signifies Supplication.

‡ Bede.

choly circumstances of his accession corresponded with the gloomy state of the Church,—in the East, almost universally fallen,—in the West, tarnished with much superstition, and defiled by variety of wickedness. The whole period of his episcopacy, which was thirteen years and a half,* was disastrous beyond measure, because of the ferocious Lombards; and Gregory himself was firmly persuaded that the end of the world was near. Hence he had evidently a strong contempt of sublunary things, and loved to refresh his mind with prospects beyond the grave. Nor has the sceptical, philosophical taste, as it is called, of this day, any reason to plume itself on comparison with that of Gregory. What is there, for instance, in the scene we have been just reviewing, which should excite the contempt of the philosopher, or rather, of the infidel who calls himself philosopher? Some superstition has appeared in it: it was an age of superstition: the form of Christianity was degenerated even in the best; but the divine religion sparkled through the gloom in the real life of humanity, faith, and repentance. The spiritual benefit of many, it is highly probable, resulted from the pastoral labours and litanies of Gregory; and whether is more rational, to fear the wrath of God, when his hand is upon us, to weep and pray, and implore his grace and mercy, in reliance on the promises of his word, beholding the scourge as really sent from God; or to harden the heart in jocose and fastidious sneers at the weakness of superstition, and to see and learn nothing from the desolating judgments of the Almighty, that may lead us to repentance.

In Gregory's works we have a collection of epistles, which will give us a view of his labours and transactions. Disci-

His Epistles.

pline, and indefatigable attention to order, justice, mercy, and piety, mark all his proceedings. The immediate amplitude of authority and of extensive jurisdiction, to which superstition had already advanced the Roman See, and which afforded such capacious fuel to pride and ambition in some of his predecessors and many of his successors, was to him only the cause of anxious care and conscientious solicitude. Italy and Sicily were of themselves too large a theatre of action; but with the government of these he received the pre-

vailing notion of a superintendence of the Roman See over all the churches, derived from St. Peter. In him, at least, the idea excited no pleasing sensations of dominion. A fatherly inspection of Christendom without civil power called him to incessant labour; besides that his own diocese was much too great for any one man's capacity. Humility and the fear of God were his ruling dispositions; and it is evident to a careful observer of Gregory, that he exerted authority in full consistency with these. Moreover he found time to expound the Scriptures, to perform the office of a sedulous pastor, and to write much for the instruction of mankind. Deeply must the spirit of that man have been impressed with the prospects and hopes of immortality, who amidst bodily infirmities, and in times of public perplexity, could persevere in such a course of arduous labours. I shall endeavour to enable the reader to form a judgment for himself of the man, by a review of his letters; omitting those which are the least interesting.

He directed the bishops of Sicily to hold an annual visitation at Syracuse or Catania under his subdeacon, and to attend in it to things which related to the public and ecclesiastical welfare, to relieve the necessities of the poor and oppressed, and to admonish and correct those who had fallen into errors. In which council he begs that they would be guarded against malice, envy, and discord, and maintain a godly unity and charity.*

He reminds the prætor of Sicily, whose duty it was to send corn into Italy from that fruitful granary of the empire, to be just and equitable in his dealings, to remember that life is short, that he must soon appear before the Judge of all, and that he can carry away with him nothing of his gains, and that only the causes and methods of his gains will follow him to judgment.†

To a friend he writes thus on his promotion: "I value not the congratulations of strangers on my advancement. But it is a serious grief to me, that you, who know me thoroughly, should felicitate me on the occasion. Ye have long known my wish; I should have obtained the rest which I sought, could I have been gratified in it."‡

"If charity," says he, writing to John

* Bede.

• B. I. Ep. 1. † Ep. 2. ‡ Ep. 3.

bishop of Constantinople, "consist in the love of our neighbour, why do not ye love me as yourselves? With what ardour and zeal ye would fly from the weight of episcopacy I know, and yet ye took no pains to hinder the imposition of this burden on me. But as the government of an old and crazy vessel is committed to me, weak and unworthy as I am, I beseech you, by the Lord, that you would stretch out the hand of prayer to my relief."*

The employment of deciding causes, which in these times fell to the lot of bishops, must have been tedious and burdensome to a mind of conscientious exactness, like that of Gregory. Hear how feelingly he complains of the load, in a letter to Theoctista, sister to the emperor:

"Under[†] colour of the bishopric, I find I am brought back to the world, in which I am enslaved to such a quantity of earthly cares, as I never remember to have been infested with in my lay capacity. I have lost the sublime joys of myself; and, sinking inwardly, seem to rise externally. I deplore my expulsion from the face of my Maker. I was endeavouring to live out of the world and the flesh: to drive away all the phantasms of body from the eyes of my mind, and to see supernal joys mentally; and with my inmost soul panting after God, I said, my heart hath said to thee, 'thy face, Lord, will I seek.' Desiring nothing, and fearing nothing of the world, I seemed to have almost realized that of the prophet: 'I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth.' Surely it is so with him, who looks down from his intellectual elevation on all the grandeur and glory of the earth. But suddenly from the height of peace and stability, impelled by the whirlwind of this temptation, I have fallen into fears and terrors; because though I fear not for myself, I fear much for those who are committed to my charge: I am shaken with the fluctuations of causes on all sides, and say, 'I am come into deep waters, so that the floods run over me.' After the hurry of causes is over, I desire to return to my heart, but excluded from it by the vain tumults of thoughts, I cannot return."—Such is the picture which Gregory draws of his mental situation in the midst of all his envied greatness. Experience and habit might in time lessen his anxieties. Nor was it through want

of capacity for business that he suffered thus extremely. No age ever saw a bishop more vigorous, firm and circumspect. The immensity of ecclesiastical employment, which went through his hands, seems almost incredible. I rejoice to find in him such vivid tokens of that spiritual sensibility and life, which it is the great business of this history to delineate, as it appeared from age to age in the church, and which distinguishes real Christians as much from nominal ones, as from all other men. In the mean time I have to regret, that while the power and experience of godliness decayed, the amplitude of bishoprics was so much augmented, and that so much extraneous matter, which ought to have been committed to other hands, was thrown upon them. The consequence has been that the dignitaries of the church have ever since been thrown into circumstances peculiarly disadvantageous. Those of a secular spirit have toiled with eagerness for worldly and selfish ends, without feeling any injury to the spiritual life, because they had none; those of a heavenly spirit have felt like Gregory under the united pressures of conscientious care and the tumult of thoughts very alien from the Christian life, and tending to extinguish it.

The pious and upright Anastasius of Antioch has been already introduced to the reader's notice. Gregory had contracted an intimacy with him while in the East, and he writes to him thus in answer to his letter: "I received your letter, as a weary man does rest, as a sick man health, as a thirsty person a fountain, as one overcome with heat a shade. I read not mere words; I perceived the heart itself to be discovering your affection towards me in the spirit." He goes on to complain of Anastasius's cruel kindness, in having contributed to his promotion, and describes his burdens in his usual manner. "But when you call me the mouth and lamp of the Lord, and a person capable of profiting many, this is added to the load of my iniquities, that I receive praise instead of punishment for my sins. How I am overloaded, no words can express; you may form some idea from the brevity of my letter, in which I say so little of Him whom I love above all. I have begged of the emperor to allow you to visit me at Rome, that while I enjoy your company, we may relieve the tediousness of our

* Ep. 4.

† Ep. 5.

pilgrimage by conversing together of the heavenly country.* It is not easy for persons, unacquainted with their own heart, to believe all this sense of unworthiness to be genuine in Gregory; men who know themselves will believe that he spoke sincerely.

Gregory was solicitous for the conversion of the Lombards from the Arian heresy, and therefore he wrote to the bishops of Italy, to avail themselves of their influence to unite all the young persons of that nation, who had been baptized in the Arian communion, to the general church, to preach to them the doctrine of eternal life, and to secure to themselves a pleasing account of their pastoral labours at the last day.† Under his administration a gradual accession of this people was made to the church, notwithstanding the great power of the Lombard princes, and their obstinate attachment to Arianism. Indeed the shining example of Gregory himself must have made a very powerful impression on the minds of all who had opportunity of knowing him. He was careful to preserve the great revenues of the church, but no man was ever more conscientious to employ them to good purposes. As he loved to imitate his predecessor Gelasius,‡ he followed the statement of the revenues which he had drawn up, and formed an estimate of them in money; distributions of which he made to the clergy, monasteries, churches, the officers of his house, domestic, and hospitals. He regulated the sums to be allotted to each at four times of the year, an order which was observed three hundred years after. A great volume was kept in the palace of the Lateran, containing the names of the poor who were the objects of his liberality, their age and circumstances, at Rome, in Italy, and even in distant provinces. On every first day of the month, he distributed to the necessities of the poor, according to the season, various articles of provision. Every day he distributed alms to the sick and infirm; and before he sat down to eat, he sent portions from his table to some indigent people, who were ashamed to appear. It would be tedious to recount from his letters the instances of his liberality. He pressed his agents to inform him of ob-

jects, and loved to exceed the expectations of his petitioners. But while he abounded in benefactions, he would receive none himself. "We ought to refuse," said he, writing to Felix bishop of Messina, "presents which are expensive to the churches. Send to the other clergymen every year what is established by usage. But as I love not presents, I forbid you to send me any for the future. I thank you for the palm-trees which you sent me, but I have caused them to be sold, and have sent you the price of them." The unhappy wars of Italy having caused great desolations of the Churches, that the remaining inhabitants might not be forsaken, he gave those churches in charge to the neighbouring bishops. If two of them did not contain, singly, a sufficient number of persons to constitute a diocese, he joined them together under one bishop, insisting on equal care being taken of that in which he did not reside, as of that in which he did. He made no difficulty of obliging a bishop to leave a small church, where he was little more than titular pastor, to govern a more important one.* Having discovered several abuses committed in the management of the revenues in Sicily, he took care to reform them. "We are informed," says he,† "that corn is bought of the peasants, under the market price; I direct that they be paid always according to the current price, without deducting the corn lost by shipwreck, provided that you take care that they do not transport it out of season. We forbid all base exactions; and, that after my death the farmers may not be charged anew, let a certificate be delivered to them in writing, containing the sum which each is obliged to pay. Take particular care, that false weights be not made use of in receiving the payments, as the deacon Servus Dei discovered, but break them in pieces, and cause new ones to be made. I have been informed that farmers are distressed at the first time of the payment of their rents; for, having not yet sold their fruits, they are obliged to borrow at heavy interest. Supply them therefore out of the stock of the church with what they may have borrowed, and receive their payments by degrees, lest you oblige them to sell their

* Ep. 7.

† Ep. 17.

‡ Fleury, B. xxiv. C. xvi. Vol. iv.

§ B. I. Ep. 18, 44, 23, 57, 65, 54, 30.

* Ep. 62. He writes thus to Peter his agent in Sicily.

† B. I. Ep. 64, &c. B. II. Ep. 20.

commodities at an under price, to make good their rents. In general, I WILL NOT SUFFER THE CHURCH TO BE DEFILED BY RARE GAINS."

This is a specimen of the uprightness and attention of Gregory to those secular concerns, under which his spirit so much groaned. A pharisee would have found a feast for his pride in so much beneficence. But Gregory was humble, he could not find rest to his soul in such exercises, however laudable; and though his heart and head seemed as well fitted as any man's in any age for such work, and though he went through it with much ability and success, yet it were to be wished that he had been allowed a larger portion of time to pay attention to the more spiritual duties of his station. This short extract however (for the account might have been swelled to a large size) may deserve some attention from persons, whether ecclesiastical or secular, whose employments are of a similar nature. Let them ask themselves, whether with Gregory's care for the preservation of their rights (and in that he was as firm and strenuous as Christian charity allows,) they are also like him upright, disinterested, and merciful. And as human malignity has been abundantly gratified in large details of the encroachments and oppressions of churchmen, it falls within the plan of these memoirs, to show that all churchmen have not been thus iniquitous; that those who are humble and evangelically pious, are also, above all men, upright, munificent, and liberal.

Peter, bishop of Terraco in Spain, had consented to a species of persecution of the Jews in his diocese, by permitting them to be molested in their festivities, and to be more than once driven from the place in which they celebrated them. Let those, who have been led by fashionable historians to annex the idea of persecution to that of the priesthood, take notice, that Gregory bishop of Rome wrote to Peter, to condemn the practice, and to give his decisive opinion, that the Jews should not be in the least molested, that they ought to be won over to the faith by the SWEETNESS of Gospel-preaching, and by the denunciation of divine judgments against infidelity, and that these were christian arts and methods, while those of a different nature tended only to harden and disgust the human mind.*

To Leander of Seville* he expresses with tears the pressures of his mind under loads of solicitude, and earnestly entreats his prayers. He congratulates him also on the conversion of king Recaredus of Spain, and while he rejoices at the news of that prince's piety and virtues, he admonishes the bishop to watch over the royal convert, that his life may correspond to so hopeful a beginning. He wrote sometime after to the same prince, to recommend to him a strong guard over anger, pride, and lust, vices more peculiarly apt to infect princes. Of all the princes of this time, he seems most to have adorned the gospel. He was just, munificent, and liberal. And before he left the world, he publicly confessed his sins, and appeared to have been possessed of true piety, so far as we can judge. He died about the close of this century.

To Virgilius and Theodorus, bishops of Marseilles, he writes on occasion of the persecuting methods made use of against the Jews. He again bears testimony against the compulsory practices; and declares how sorry he is to find, that many of that people had been brought, by violence rather than by preaching, to the baptismal font. "If a Jew is brought thither by necessity, not by the sweetness of the word, returning to his former superstition, he dies in a worst state than that from which he seemed to be regenerated. Preach frequently to them, that they may desire to be changed, through the love of what they hear. Thus your desire of saving souls will be accomplished, and the convert will not return like the dog to his vomit. Preach, that their dark minds may be illuminated, and that under God they may be brought to real regeneration."†

He wrote also to Pascasius, bishop of Naples, complaining of the violence used to the Jews in driving them from their solemnities. He blames this method, and exhorts to the same purpose as before.‡ It is well known what different methods, since the time of Gregory, have been supported by the Roman Popes. I appropriate the term Pope to Antichrist, who did not, accurately speaking, exist as yet in the Western church. On the other side, Gregory was zealous to suppress the attempts of Jews to seduce Christians, and prohibited their purchasing of Christians for slaves.§

* B. I. Ep. 34.

* Ep. 41.

† B. I. Ep. 45.

‡ B. II. Ep. 15.

§ B. II. Ep. 76.

The Lombards were a constant scourge to Italy in the time of Gregory, and he was aware of their intentions to invade Sicily. Hence he wrote to all the bishops of the island to supplicate the Lord in litany every fourth and sixth day of the week, and exhorted them not only to draw their flocks to this association of prayer, but also to preach to them the doctrine of repentance. "For if the gracious Lord behold us loving his commands, he is able to defend us from the enemy, and to prepare eternal joys for us."^{*}

Natalis, bishop of Salona, had written to Gregory in defence of the entertainments given by the clergy. The bishop of Rome shows his assertions, but under these important restrictions, "that no absent persons be slandered at these meetings, that none be made an object of satire, that the empty discourse of secular business be avoided, that the word of God be read in them, that no more meat and drink be used than is needed for the refreshment of the body, and to fit it for the discharge of duty. If this be your practice, I confess you to be masters of temperance."[†] But it seems Gregory's animadversions on the feasting of the Salonian clergy had given offence, by that which he adds: "You told me to be reprehended by me, who, though I am your superior in church dignity (I do not mean as a man,) am willing to be corrected and reproved by all. I think, indeed, that man as my friend, through whose advice I am enabled to wipe off the blemishes of my soul before the appearance of the awful Judge." One cannot form any great idea of the piety of this Natalis, who had excused himself from assiduous reading of the Scriptures, partly on account of the pressure of tribulations, partly by a mere cavil, because our Lord had told his disciples, that it should be given them in the same hour what they should speak. Gregory informs him, that the Scriptures were given us, that we, through patience and comfort of them, might have hope. How he answers the cavil, it is not necessary to say. "But we cannot be like you," Natalis had said. The bishop of Rome was not to be seduced by such evasive flattery. "The ecclesiastics you bestow

on me," said he, "seem to be spoken in derision, because I cannot in truth find them realized in my experience." We see in all this, on one side, a zealous pastor labouring to revive a sense and spirit of godliness in his brethren; on the other, a slothful and false-hearted minister, poorly excusing himself by feigned apologies, from doing the Lord's work with vigour and sincerity.

After having given a beautiful description of charity in writing to Dominicus bishop of Carthage,^{*} he shows how deeply his soul was penetrated with the importance of the pastoral office. In their views of this, many of the ancient Fathers, whom we deride for their superstitions, do far excel the generality of pastors in our times. Let him who has entered on this office with merely secular views, read, and, if he can, blush and weep, after he has considered, that no age since the Apostles' days has ever seen one more intently and sincerely laborious than Gregory. "Weighty indeed is the office of a Pastor. He must be an example to the flock, and after this he must learn to keep himself humble. He must ever be intent on the ministry of the word, remembering who hath said, OCCUPY TILL I COME. This we then truly execute, when by life and doctrine we gain the souls of our neighbours, strengthen the weak by setting before them the joys of the heavenly kingdom, and bend the proud by sounding aloud the punishments of hell, when we spare none against truth, and when given up to heavenly friendships, we fear not human enmity. I tremble at my own infirmity. How can I sustain the last judgment, seeing so very little fruit of my labours. Dearest brother, I implore your prayers for me. By the union of charity, we have a common interest."[†]

To Boniface, bishop of Rhegium, he gives a handsome reproof for boasting of the good deeds he had done. He owned that he rejoiced to hear of his works of mercy. But he was sorry to find, that he himself had spoken of them to many persons. He warns him to take care that he did not mar the whole by ostentation. "What are we, dust and ashes, that we should covet the praise of men! Hum you should seek to please, whose coming we expect, and whose retributions will know no end."[‡]

Evangelus, a deacon of the church of

^{*} B. IX. 45. Hence I apprehend the origin of the use of the Library on Wednesdays and Fridays in public worship.

[†] B. II. 37.

^{*} B. II. 29.

[†] B. II. 43.

Sypontum, had complained to Gregory, that his daughter had been deflowered by Felix, the grandson of the bishop of the same name. The bishop of Rome, not without some animadversion on the bishop's careless education of his grandson, ordered, on supposition of the truth of the fact, that Felix should be obliged to marry the young woman, or, in case of refusal, be scourged and confined in a monastery, excommunicated, and remain in a state of penance, and not be suffered to go abroad till farther orders were received from Gregory.* It seemed proper to mention this ancient precedent of the practice of spiritual courts. Doubtless, they were, in their origin, courts of censure on immoralities not so easily cognizable in courts of common law. The necessities of society, and the depravity of human nature, seem to require the existence of such tribunals. The Roman office of censor was of the same kind. Nor would mankind be disposed to depreciate them, were they naturally as sincere in their regard for the honour of God and for moral decorum, as they are for the preservation of property. The abuses of these courts among ourselves are well known. But why persons of rank and property in our country do not labour to regulate them, or rather, do not endeavour to institute a censorship of morals that shall be practicable and effectual,—why they indiscriminately condemn the whole principle, while they permit lewdness to be practised without any restraint,—are questions not hard to be determined. In the mean time, every lover of equity and decency should prefer a spiritual court, armed with some power for the suppression of vice, before the licentiousness, which, under the name of liberty, threatens among ourselves to destroy all the barriers which our ancestors erected against vice and immorality. Severe as Gregory's conduct may now seem, it was wholesome, no doubt, and society felt the good consequences.

In writing to Priscus, a patrician of the East, he justly describes the mixed state of human affairs, and the duties of Christian faith and humility. The thought is common to moralists in all ages; but Gregory ennobled it with real principles of Christianity.

Gregory corresponded also with Theodolinda, the queen of the Lombards: She was the widow of their king Autha-

rit, a zealous Arian. After his death, she married Aigulfus, a Lombard, whom the nation received as king. Being orthodox herself, she brought over her husband, and the whole nation, at length, to the same persuasion. Gregory congratulated her on the happy prospect of the progress of Christianity among the Lombards. What degree of real piety was in all this, does not appear: the temporal benefit of Gregory's labours was, however, evident in the establishment of peace for some time between the Lombards and the Roman empire.*

Anastasius, bishop of Antioch, seems ever to have been a special favourite of Gregory. He had been ejected from his See by the injustice of Justin, the successor of Justinian, and had lived in exile a number of years. He was at length, however, restored to his situation,† and Gregory wrote to him a letter on the occasion, full of pious and tender sentiments. In this letter, he endeavours to solace the mind of the prelate with the same scriptural views and promises, with which his own had been refreshed under a variety of afflictions. The hope of glory hereafter to be revealed, it is evident, was the spring of joy to his own soul, and enabled him to bear calamities with patience.‡ In another letter to him, he writes, "you ought to keep in mind, as you do, what is written: 'In the last days perilous times shall come.'—And though in old age you suffer much, remember him, who told St. Peter, that when he was old, another should gird him. Yet, in saying this, I recollect that from youth you have laboured under many adversities. Numbers rejoice at our sorrows, as you write; but we know who hath said, 'Ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice; and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.' We feel the performance of the former part, let us expect the latter part also. You say that some who ought to relieve, add burdens to you; I know there are those who come in sheep's clothing, but who inwardly are ravening wolves. We are not disturbed on account of their ambition in arrogating all honour to themselves, because we trust in the Almighty, whose law and rule is, that those who covet what belongs to others, are sooner on that account deprived of

* B. II. 79, 81.

* B. XII. Ep. 7.

† B. IV. 81.

‡ Evagrius, B. VI. toward the end.

their own. For we know who hath said, 'He that exalteth himself shall be abased,' and, 'a haughty spirit before a fall.' In these days, as I find, new heretical wars arise, which would reduce to nothing the prophets, the gospel, and all the fathers together. But while Anastasius lives, we trust in the grace of our Protector; their swords will be broken in pieces, striking against a rock. The Church, in the mean time, by the subtilty of heretics, is sharpened in her doctrine, and learns the truth more accurately. The heart of God approaches to us, and, by temptations we are brought to feel him more sensibly. What I suffer from the swords of barbarians, and from the perverseness of judges, I spare to relate, that I may not increase the sorrow of him whom I wish to console. But I weigh these words, 'This is your hour, and the power of darkness.' The power of light then shall have its day afterwards; because the east are the light of the world, and it is written, 'the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;' hence, as we suffer in the hour and power of darkness is not to be regretted. You wish, if it were possible, that we might converse without pen and ink, and it is a painful circumstance that we are almost as distant from one another as East and West. But truly we by grace are made one. Why wish you for the wings of the dove, which you have already? The wings are the love of God and our neighbour. By them the Church flies through the earth: if you had not these wings, you would not have come to me by your epistle with so much affection.* As your life is necessary to all good men, may you, after a long time, arrive at the joys of the heavenly country!"

I have only to add concerning Anastasius, that he lived five years after his restoration, and died about the end of the century. We are much in the dark concerning the trials of this great and good man. Gregory's words however will stand as proper to be addressed to the suffering children of God in all ages. I conceive the bishop of Antioch to have been a luminary in the East, envied and persecuted extremely, bearing testimony to the faith of Christ in the decline of the Eastern Church; and that his life and transactions would be very instructive, if they had been transmitted to posterity.

John, bishop of Constantinople, disturbed in Gregory's time the peace of the Church, by assuming to himself the title of universal bishop.* The pride and arrogance with which he assumed it, was only equalled by the obstinacy with which he persevered. Gregory wrote with much vehemence† against his haughtiness, and on this occasion, laid down some memorable rules of humility, which severely condemned, not himself, but his successors in the Roman See. In what a state must the East have been, to reverse as a great saint, both living and dying, so proud a man as John of Constantinople! But their godliness was nearly expiring, and the Mahometan scourge was at hand.

Gregory wrote to Dominicus an African bishop, entreating his prayers, and thanking him for his presents. By this letter it appears that the spirit of true godliness was not yet extinct in Africa.‡ There is another letter to the same person, who, it seems, was bishop of Carthage. It is full of the spirit of charity and devotion, though there is nothing in it that calls for any particular attention.§

Cyriacus succeeded John of Constantinople, whose pride has been mentioned already. At his solemn ordination the people shouted, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."¶ Superstition naturally paved the way for the dominion of the Clergy; and the bishops of the great Seas were gradually increasing in secular grandeur. The congratulation just mention was calculated to encourage Cyriacus to emulate the ambition of his predecessor. Gregory* justly finds fault with it, in a letter to the great man of Constantinople, shows that the acclamation properly belonged to the stone which the Lord had laid for a foundation in his Church,** and observes that it was impious to ascribe those praises to the creature, which belong to the Creator. Yet he is willing to excuse the mistake as proceeding from a charitable intention. Gregory, no

John, the bishop or patriarch of Constantinople, rebuked by Gregory for assuming the title of universal bishop.

* This bishop goes by the name of John the Fastidious. He died A. D. 595.

† B. IV. 32.

‡ Id. 162.

§ B. VI. 171.

¶ B. V. 119.

‡ Ps. cxviii. 94.

** Ps. cxviii. 22.

doubt, had himself too high views of the dignity of his own See, and its supposed relation to Saint Peter blinded his judgment. The exaltation of Constantinople, through the domineering pretensions of the late bishop, excited his jealousy; and so subtle and intricate are the motions of the heart, that he himself might not at all be aware of the selfishness which probably influenced his conduct. I doubt not, however, from the unaffected humility of his whole life, that he cordially detested sacerdotal ambition. The excessive dignity of the prelatical character would have done little harm to Christendom, had all prelates been like Gregory. But, as this was not to be expected, the state ought to have set bounds to ecclesiastical encroachments before this period.

Gregoria, a lady of the bed-chamber to Augusta the empress, in her anxiety for her soul, and in the height of her admiration of Gregory, by letter requested him to inform her, if he could, by revelation, that her sins were forgiven her.* Gregory assured her, "that certainty in this matter was not attainable: we must repent and mourn over our sins, and apply for pardon continually." He declares himself unworthy of having such a revelation made to him, and gives her useful and salutary advices, so far as he saw into the system of divine truth. In regard to the doctrine of justification, he seems to have had the same sentiments which Augustine had, and with the same confusion of ideas. How superstition, servility, and darkness prevailed in the Church at this time, is but too evident. Yet Gregory was a luminary, compared with most of his contemporaries.

To a person named Andrew, affecting secular greatness, he writes with much pathos on the vanity of sublunary things, a subject which he touched with more sensibility, because he was strongly impressed with the idea of the world being nearly at an end.†

Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, observing that some of his people adored the images which had been placed in churches, in his zeal brake them, and by this conduct gave so much disgust, that many withdrew from his communion.

Gregory rebukes him on this account, and wishes him to conciliate the affections of the people, by permitting

them to make use of images, as pieces of history to instruct their minds in the great facts of Christianity. He advises him to allow them as books for the illiterate people, and at the same time to caution them seriously against paying any adoration to them.—I have stated the substance of the sentiments of both these bishops.* It seems not probable, that these who deserted Serenus on this account, had much Christianity to lose. Gregory had not the opportunity of knowing so well as we do the danger of his advice. Thus far is evident, that image-worship had not generally commenced in Gregory's time, and that he seriously reprobated the practise. From these facts, however, the gradual approximation to idolatry may be traced, and the danger of such a mode of teaching, as that which Gregory recommends, has been so abundantly proved since his time, that no doubt remains but in this instance the bishop of Marseilles judged better than he.

The correspondence between Gregory and Brunehalt, the queen of Austrasia or Burgundy, a division of the French monarchy, which took place amidst the confusions of that country after the death of Clovis, will deserve to be succinctly stated.† She was an ambitious, dissolute woman; yet, in that age of superstition, she endeavoured to impose both on herself and on the world by an appearance of piety. She attempted to extend her power while her young male descendants were on the throne; and permitted, or rather encouraged, their vicious conduct, that she might herself keep the reins of government. Gregory, though he commends her respectful attention to the forms of religion, blames her ecclesiastical proceedings in some matters of great moment. He represents, with much earnestness, the irregular and even simoniacal ordinations of pastors in France, and observes, with great energy, the deplorable state of the flocks, and the scandal of all godliness, which must ensue from such conduct. Finding that his remonstrances had little effect, he urges her still more strongly on the same subject, and observes the probability of divine vengeance overtaking her family, if she corrected not these enormities. It is remarkable that this wicked woman

* B. VI. Ep. 186.

† B. VI. Ep. 190.

* B. VII. 120. B. IX. 9.

† B. VII. 113. B. IX. 57. 64.

was afterwards put to a cruel death, and that her descendants were slain or expelled. From some parts of the more early correspondence between them, one would think that Gregory thought highly of her virtues. Time, however, undervalued him, and it must be confessed, that he treated her with the undissembled plainness which becomes a Christian pastor.

The bodily afflictions of Gregory, in connection with the miseries of the times, are fleetly described by him in a letter to *Juliana*, a patrician lady.*

"I can find nothing else to say of myself, than that as a just punishment of my sins, I have been almost eleven months confined to my bed. I am so oppressed with the gout, that life is a heavy punishment. I faint daily through pain, and breathe after death as my remedy.† Among the clergy and people of the city, scarcely a freeman or a slave is exempt from fevers, Africa and the East are also full of misery and desolation. I see the end of all things approaching; he therefore less solicitous on account of your own calamities. Study with alacrity that godliness, which has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come."

In a letter to *Eulogius*,‡ bishop of Alexandria, written the year after, he says, "I have been near two years confined to my bed, in constant pain.—Often have I been forced to return to my bed, when I scarcely had left it, by the violence of pain.—Thus I die daily, and yet live. But I am a grievous criminal, and, as such, deservedly shut up in so painful a prison. I daily cry with the Psalmist, *Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to thy name.*" While he lived, he was frequently thus afflicted;

* B. VII. 127.

† In another letter he speaks of a disorder different from the gout; namely, a grievous burning heat, that spread over all his body, and took away his spirits. By such severe exertions was this good man trained for the kingdom of heaven, and he evidently grew in humanity, tender sympathy with others in distress, and ardent breathings for the heavenly country.

‡ Thus *Eulogius*, by preaching and writing, strengthened the hands of the gods in the East, and lessened the influence of heretics. He seems, by Gregory's correspondence with him, to have been a wise and pious pastor, such as in Alexandria and the East were rarely to be found.

but the vigour of his mind was unabated, and his faculties were unclouded.

Another instance of his bodily sufferings shall close this branch of his story. Writing to his friend *Venantius*, who was likewise afflicted with the gout, he says, "what ought we to do, but to call our sins to remembrance, and to thank God, that he purifies us by afflicting our flesh.—Let us take care, that we pass not from one degree of torment to another, and let us consider the goodness of God, who threatens us with death, that he may imprint in us an edifying fear of his judgments. How many sinners have continued immersed in sin through life without a head-ach, and have suddenly been cast into hell!"—I rejoice to find in this great man the marks of that deep humility, which is known only to true converts, and of that wise improvement of affliction, of which theorists may reason, but which saints only feel. He concludes thus benevolently and piously to his friend: "May the Lord infuse into your soul these words by the inspiration of his Spirit, cleanse you from your iniquities, give you here the joy of his consolation, and eternal reward hereafter."*

Gregory having been informed, that *Clementina*, a woman of quality, had harboured some suspicions against him, wrote to her in a charitable spirit, and with the intention of effacing the disagreeable impressions. He at the same time mildly reproved her for the want of a pliable and forgiving temper. He reminds her of the well-known petition in the Lord's prayer, and delivered several weighty sentiments adapted to the subject.†

On no occasion was Gregory wanting to impress on men's minds the care of the soul. Two persons having requested his assistance in their temporal difficulties, after having said what the case required, he exhorted them not to murmur at the divine dispensations, nor to undertake any thing unjust under the pretence of necessity; but to fix their hope on the mercy of their Redeemer, who forsaketh not those who trust in him, to occupy their minds with divine things, and to repose on him who gives what we have not, repairs what we have lost, and preserves what he has repaired.‡

The subdeacon was an officer of the

* B. IX. 25. † B. VIII. 16. ‡ B. XI. 23.

Church, who superintended, under the bishop of Rome, the distant bishoprics and parishes which belonged to his jurisdiction.* Gregory wrote to Anthemius, the subdeacon of Campania, that he had heard of Paschasius, a bishop, who was so slothful, that he neglected every pastoral duty, admitted of no advice, and gave himself up to the building of a ship. It seems he used to go down to the sea on this very unclerical employment with one or two of his clergymen, and was held in derision by all the country. Gregory directs his subdeacon to reprimand him in the presence of some presbyters, or gentlemen of the neighbourhood, and try by that method to reform him. Should that prove ineffectual, he enjoins him to send Paschasius to Rome, to answer for himself before Gregory.

I know not the result; but it seemed worth while to mention the case, as it illustrates the state of the church discipline of that day, as well as the vigilant attention of Gregory. That so many should nominally sustain the pastoral character, whose taste and genius, as well as disposition and sentiments, are repugnant to it, and who seem qualified to excel in any thing rather than what is sacerdotal, is matter for lamentation. The profane avarice of parents educating their children for the ministry at all events, is one great cause of it.

CHAPTER VI.

GREGORY'S CONDUCT TOWARD THE EMPERORS MAURITIUS AND PHOCAS.

It is impossible for any impartial person, who has attended to the spirit and conduct of Gregory as exhibited in his pastoral memoirs, not to feel a conviction of the eminent piety, integrity, and humility of this bishop. Yet it has been the fashion to arraign his character with great severity, on account of his conduct in the latter part of his life. He has been accused of great ingratitude towards one excellent and virtuous emperor, and of egregious flattery towards another who was profligate and tyrannical. The evidence already adduced of his disposition and temper should naturally dispose us to receive with much caution such grievous accusations. I shall throw together into

this chapter the facts on which our judgment is to be founded.*

A series of events had given Gregory a strong prejudice against the government of Mauritius. Their opposition of sentiment had remarkably alienated their spirits from one another, though they once had the most sincere esteem for each other's character. Gregory had been very acceptable to Mauritius, who had strongly favoured his promotion to the bishopric. Nor is there any reason to doubt of the sincerity of the bishop's professions of a very high regard for the emperor, when he made them. Changes of this sort are common amongst mankind, and the declarations which men make at different times of the characters of the same persons, however contradictory, are not to be always charged to insincerity.

Mauritius made a law, to prohibit men, who had held civil offices under the government, from undertaking the administration of the Church. Of this Gregory approved; but a clause in the same law, which forbade military men to enter into monasteries till the time of their service was expired, or till they were disabled for the profession, met not with the same approbation. Gregory, too fond of monastic institutions, and conceiving them necessary for the souls of some, though not of all, expostulated with the emperor on the impiety of the decree. He does so, however, with all possible decency and respect, and lays open his sentiments with a frankness and modesty, which do honour to his character. Doubtless he was mistaken, and the mistake was common to him with the most pious of those times. He promulged, however, the emperor's decree through Italy, and thus, as he himself says, he was faithful to God, at the same time obedient to his prince.†

In this transaction, in which it does not appear that he succeeded with the emperor, the zeal of Gregory was quickened by the strong presentiments of the near approach of the day of judgment, which filled his mind. This mistaken notion seems to have dwelt with Gregory; nor was it in him a mere speculation. He was practically serious in the expectation. I find him pressing it in another letter to the nobles and landholders of the island of Sardinia, whom he reproved for suffer-

* See Bower's History of the Popes, Vol. ii. Gregory.

† B. XII. Ep. 100.

ing their labourers to remain in a state of idleness. He justly observes, that they were bound in conscience to take care of the spiritual instruction of those who laboured for them in temporal things, and he earnestly exhorts them to promote the Christian work.* The selfishness and insensibility, with which so many, in modern times, can reap lucrative advantages, from the labours of mariners, slaves, and apprentices, with no more attention to their best interests, than if they were of the brute creation, here naturally forces itself on our attention. Other letters of the same kind, demonstrate the zeal of Gregory for the propagation of Christianity among idolaters and infidels.

Italy suffered extremely from the Lombards, as has been observed, and we can form no hopeful idea of the real conversion of Aigilulph, the husband of Theodolinda, since he still ravaged the Roman territories, and filled them with misery and desolation. These evils were a constant source of affliction to the tender spirit of Gregory, yet he failed not to improve them in his homilies, to the instruction of his flock. Willing to put a stop to the effusion of blood, and averse to shedding even that of the Lombards by nourishing intestine feuds among them, as he might have done, he strove to make peace with Aigilulph, and had even succeeded, when the Exarch of Ravenna, the emperor's governor of Italy, perfidiously broke the peace, and provoked the Lombard king to renew his hostilities. The Exarch himself, finding his own profit in the continuance of the war, was far persevering in it at all events, and his heart was hardened against the sufferings of the people, which Gregory deplored. Involved as we find this holy bishop in political concerns far more than it were to be wished, it is yet pleasing to see him uniformly supporting the Christian character. For now a severe trial came upon him. Martinus, induced by representations from the Exarch, reproached him severely with his conduct, and in effect called him a foolish person. Gregory, humble as he was, felt the indignity, of all others the hardest to be borne by men of understanding. Yet he checked his spirit, and broke not the just bounds prescribed to the Christian and to the subject of an emperor. "While you reprove

me," says he, "in sparing, you have not spared me. While you politely tax me with simplicity, you doubtless call me a fool. I own the charge. Had I not been so, I should not have come hither to this episcopal scene, to endure what I suffer amidst the Lombard wars.—Indeed if I saw not the daily increase of the calamities of the Romans, I should gladly be silent with respect to personal contempt. But this is my affliction; the same cause which subjects me to the imputation of folly, brings my countrymen under the yoke of the Lombards. And while I am not believed, the strength of the enemy increases mightily. This I suggest to my good Lord, that he may believe of me what evils he pleases, only let him not give his ears to any sort of persons concerning the public good, but regard facts more than words.—I know I am a sinner; I daily offend, and am daily chastised. I trust the chastisement of your displeasure will work for my good at the last day. But let me recount my grievances. First, the peace I had made with Aigilulph, with no loss to the state, is broken. In the next place, soldiers are removed from Rome, some to perish by the enemy, others to defend Perusium, while Rome is exposed to danger. Further, Aigilulph appears with his forces; with these eyes I have seen Romans, like dogs, tied with cords, and dragged to be sold as slaves among the Franks.—As to myself, in the integrity of my conscience I am not detected with false accusations; I am prepared to endure all, provided my soul's salvation be not endangered. But it grieves me to the heart, that Gregory and Castorius, who did all that men could do, while Rome was besieged, have fallen under your displeasure on my account. That you threaten me with an awful account at the day of judgment, will require a few words in answer. I beseech you cease from this language. 'Judge nothing before the time,' says that excellent preacher Paul. I only say this in brief, that, unworthy sinner as I am, I rest more on the mercy of Jesus than on your justice. Men are very ignorant of the measures of our judgment; perhaps what you commend, he will blame; and what you blame, he will commend. I leave uncertain things; I have recourse to prayers and tears alone, begging that the Lord would rule our pious emperor with his hand, and acquit him at that awful judgment; at the same time that he would teach me

so to please men, that I lose not his eternal grace."*

I have already mentioned the jealous uneasiness of Gregory at the pride of John, bishop of Constantinople. The title of Universal Bishop, had upon his own application been conferred upon him in an Eastern council, and the policy of some former emperors had induced them to compli-

ment the prelates of Constantinople with it; because the honour and influence of the imperial city were augmented by this means. Gregory was the more vexed at this, because the synod of Chalcedon had offered the same title to the Roman bishops, and they had not accepted it. He in his letters called himself the servant of the servants of God. Such humility might have been thought affected in a person not eminent for this grace. Doubtless it would have been more prudent in him not to have assumed it. But it continues to this day the title of his successors, a standing mark of egregious hypocrisy! That which deceived Gregory in this case was the erroneous notion of the pre-eminence of his own See, as belonging to St. Peter; yet I no way doubt but he sincerely abhorred the pride of the Eastern prelate. Had he himself, however, been more completely humble and less superstitious, he would have suffered the affair to pass with greater indifference. While in one respect we behold this good man acting the patriot and the Christian, relieving the distressed, and ransoming the captives with unbounded liberality, nominally possessing great ecclesiastical wealth, but employing it all to the most beneficent purposes, and sparing no labour or fatigue; in another we see him writing and negotiating with persevering vehemence concerning a title, in which, though his cause was unquestionably just, his eagerness was unnecessarily sanguine. He solicited the emperor Mauritius on the subject, but in vain. And this was an additional cause of the prejudices, which they imbibed against each other.

Mauritius cannot be vindicated in supporting the odious pride of John against the just demands of Gregory. The evil, by the countenance of the emperor, continued, and John's successor assumed the same Anti-Christian title. But Gre-

gory had still more weighty causes of complaint, and such as his episcopal duty called on him to lay before the emperor.

This he did in a letter to Constantia, the empress. "Knowing," says he, "that there were many Gentiles* in Sardinia, that they worshipped idols, and that the clergy were remiss in preaching our redeemer to them, I sent a bishop from Italy thither, who, the hand of the Lord being with him, brought over many of them to the faith. I am informed, that those, who persevere in idolatry, give a fee to the judge of the island, that they may be allowed to do so with impunity. Some, having been baptized, and ceasing to worship idols, are still obliged to pay the same fine to the judge;† who, when the bishop blamed him, answered, that he had paid so much money for the purchase of his office, that he could not recover his expenses but by such perquisites. The island of Corsica also is oppressed with such exactions and grievances, that the inhabitants are scarcely able to pay the tributes even by the sale of their children. Hence the number of proprietors in the island, relinquishing the Roman government, are reduced to put themselves under the protection of the Lombards. For what more grievous oppression can they suffer from the barbarians than to be obliged to sell their children?—I know that the emperor will say, that the whole produce of the revenue in these islands is applied to the support and defence of Italy. Be it so; but a divine blessing ought not to be expected to attend the gains of sin." He wrote again to the

* The term means idolaters in the language of the fathers. B. IV. Ep. 77.

† Gregory was much afflicted to find, that almost all the peasants of the island were still idolaters. Januarius, bishop of Cagliari, was idolent; the slaves belonging to his own church were idolaters; the other bishops of the province were equally negligent. Hospiton, the chief of the barbarians, had, however, received the Gospel; and to him Gregory recommended his missionaries, exhorting him to exert himself for the salvation of his countrymen. Gregory rebuked Januarius for his neglect of discipline in general, though he had exercised it severely in one instance, in which he had met with a personal affront. The world is still the same; I could wish that what has been mentioned did not give just cause to the reader, to recollect not only the state of religion in the West Indies, but nearer at home, in Ireland, in which, notwithstanding there are such a number of bishoprics and churches, a superstitious and idolatrous religion prevails to this day.

empress, against the pride of John, and speaks superstitiously on the merits of St. Peter, while he laments his own unworthiness. Twenty-seven years, he observes, the Roman church had suffered from the desolation of the Lombards; and its daily expenses, partly on account of the war, and partly in the support of the indigent, were incredibly great.

Gregory had also other just causes of complaint against the emperor. Property, he saw, was entirely fluctuating and insecure on account of oppressive exactions, insidious proceedings in wills, and various artifices employed by the emperor's ministers.* These evils were constantly practised in Italy, and Gregory had deplored them in vain.

Evagrius delivers a very pompous encomium on the character of Mauritius.† But his praise is declamatory and vague, and liable to the suspicion of flattery, as Mauritius was then living. After all due allowances made on account of the emperor's distance from Italy, it is impossible to vindicate his conduct. He wanted not military virtues, and had some sense of religion. But avarice was the predominant feature of his character; and how much this vice prevails to eclipse all laudable qualities in a man, was never more illustrated than in the conduct of Mauritius. Chagan, king of the Avars, a Scythian nation on the banks of the Danube, offered, for a ransom, to liberate some thousands of prisoners. He even proposed to do it at a low price; but Mauritius would not part with his money, and the barbarian in a rage massacred all his prisoners. Mauritius, though covetous, was not inhuman: he was struck with horror at the news, and besought God, that his punishment might be in this life, not in the next. His prayer was answered in the former part of it undoubtedly, and I hope also in the latter. As he had alienated the affections of his soldiers by his refusal to supply their wants, they elevated Phocas, a confidant, to the Imperial throne. Mauritius fled, but was seized, and inhumanly murdered with his wife and family. Five of his sons were slain in his sight before he himself received the fatal stroke. The little spark of divine grace, which for years seems to have maintained a dubious

existence in a heart by nature extremely avaricious, was fanned into a flame by the keen blast of wholesome affliction. Mauritius bore the scene with silent resignation, repeating only, as each of his children was butchered, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and true are thy judgments." A nurse, who took care of his youngest son, placed her own in its room: Mauritius detecting the generous fraud, discovered it to the executioners, and prevented its effect.—This is a transaction of civil history, but it falls in with our plan. The great faults of one, who had a latent spark of grace within him, were punished in this life by the wickedness of the monster Phocas, and the story deserves to be remembered as a beacon to warn professors of godliness against the love of the world. Mauritius seems to have profited abundantly by the scourge, and to have died in such a frame of mind as belongs only to Christian. We are not apt to be aware of the advantages which society receives from Christianity. Let us suppose this emperor to have been totally unacquainted with, or entirely averse to Christian principles. How immensely more pernicious his natural disposition would have been, unchecked internally, as well as externally, can scarcely be conceived.

The images of Phocas and of his wife Leontia, were sent to Rome, and received with much respect by the people, and by Gregory himself. It cannot be supposed, that the bishop of Rome could be acquainted with the personal character of Phocas, who was in truth a man of extraordinary wickedness; and the late transactions at Constantinople would naturally be misrepresented to him in the accounts transmitted thence. Prejudiced as he was against Mauritius, and willing to hope better things from the new emperor, he wrote him a congratulatory letter, in which he studiously avoided saying any thing on the detail of circumstances, of which he must have been very insufficiently informed, and dwelt on that which was certain, namely, the adorable hand of Divine Providence in changing the times, and in transferring kingdoms, as he pleases. He exults in the prospect which he had too eagerly formed of a wise, just and pious administration. He modestly hints at the great abuses of the late government, and exhorts Phocas to redress them, reminding him, "that a Roman emperor commands freemen, and

* B. XI. Ep. 36

† Toward the close of his history.

not slaves."* Such is the substance of his letter, in which I see nothing unworthy of the piety and patriotism of Gregory, but much of his wonted care for the good of the church and the public.

Gregory wrote again to Phocas, to apologize for the want of a deacon, who should reside at Constantinople. Phocas had complained to him of this, and invited him to send one. The bishop informed him, that the severity of the late government had deterred all clergymen from going thither. But, as he now hoped better things, he sent him a person, whom he recommended to his protection. He beseeches Phocas to listen to his relation of facts, as he would thence learn more distinctly the miseries which Italy had sustained without redress, for thirty-five years, from the Lombards.† Is it at all surprising, that this language should be used by a man who sincerely loved his country, and knew little of the new emperor; who probably had received a false account of his actions and character, and who had so long been, on Christian principles, both patient and loyal to an oppressive government.

In another letter to Leontia he is not to be excused from the charge of an unhappy superstition. He talks of Peter the Apostle, reminds her of the scripture-text, on the perverted use of which hangs the whole structure of the papacy,‡ and of his intercession in heaven. He prays, that she and her husband may be endowed with princely virtues, and expresses, I will not say with flattery, but with an expectation much too sanguine, his hopes of the blessings of the new administration.

Phocas was displeased with Cyriacus, the bishop of Constantinople, because he had generously interested himself in favour of the remaining branches of Mauritius's family; and while he courted the favour of Gregory and of the Romans at a distance, he tyrannized at home in an uncommon manner. But Gregory died the next year after Phocas's promotion, and had not, probably, time enough to know his genuine character, and was himself also so bowed down with pains and infirmities, that he was unable to answer a letter of Theodolinda, queen of the Lombards. He had promised to do it, if his health was restored: but he grew

less and less capable of business till he died. Had health and opportunity permitted, the vigour and piety of his character give me no room to doubt, that he would have rebuked the Roman tyrant in such a manner, as to have quite silenced the accusations, which, on this account, have been thrown upon him. That he should have opposed the usurpation of Phocas, will not be expected from those who consider the views of the primitive Christians, who intermeddled not with politics; but he, who plainly rebuked Mauritius, would certainly not have spared his successor, whose conduct was far more blameable.*

CHAPTER VII.

GREGORY'S CONDUCT WITH RESPECT TO ENGLAND.

This also has been a source of much accusation against the Roman prelate. Protestant writers, in their zeal against popery, have censured his domineering spirit with acrimony, as if the British Christians had been protestants, and the Roman Christians papists, accurately speaking. But Gregory was no pope, nor had the Britons separated from the general Church, and formed a puer establishment of their own. Superstition and ecclesiastical power, in the excess, adhered indeed to the conduct of the Roman prelate, as the fault of the age, not of his temper; and if he had perfectly avoided the fashionable evils of his time, he would have been, I had almost said, more than human. But the ideas, peculiarly popish, were not yet matured in the churches. Dissenting writers, I find, have been seduced by the same sort of prejudices as divines of the Church of England, and it is curious to observe, how different writers can find in the features of the British Church, the very figure of their own denomination. I ought to profit by the mistakes of others; that is, to forget my own times and con-

* Phocas took away the title of Universal Bishop from the prelate of Constantinople, and granted it to Boniface III. the next successor but one to Gregory. After Phocas's death the prelate of the East re-assumed the title. The two bishops each preserved it, and with equal ambition strove for the pre-eminence.

* B. XI. Ep. 36.

† Ib. 43.

‡ Matt. xvi. 18.

nations; to transplant myself into the age of which I write; to make liberal allowances for its customs and prejudices, and to enable the reader, from facts themselves, to form his own judgment.

For near a century and a half the Gospel of Christ had been declining in Britain, and for the greatest part of that time had been, as we have seen, confined to Wales and Cornwall, or to the mountains of Scotland. Ireland too still preserved something of the light, while the Angles or Saxons, our ancestors, destroyed every evangelical appearance in the heart of the island. No barbarians were ever more ferocious, or more idolatrous; and the Britons, who escaped their ravages, oppressed one another with civil broils. Being favoured with some cessation from their wars with the Saxons, they lost by degrees all traces of former piety, though the form of Christianity still remained. One proof among others, which the old historian Gildas gives of their entire want of Christian zeal is, that they took not the least pains for the conversion of the Saxons. Seven Saxon kingdoms, called the Heptarchy, were now formed, altogether ignorant and idolatrous, while the few British churches were inattentive to the propagation of Christian truth in the island. And the Saxons continued, some of them for a century, others more than two centuries, immersed in darkness.*

One cannot, from these circumstances, form any agreeable idea either of the purity or of the knowledge of the British Christians. Nor are the excuses which our protestant historians are inclined to make for their want of zeal, at all satisfactory. It has been said that, "The hostilities of the Angles would cause such attempts to be arduous;" but let the reader only reflect how such difficulties were surmounted by zealous and charitable Christians in former ages.† I cannot but therefore subscribe to the testimony of our ancient historians,‡ "that much worthier pastors were sent by the divine goodness, through whom, those, whom God had foreknown, might believe to salvation." A testimony as evangelical in its language, as it is solid in fact.

It was about 150 years after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, that Gregory

sent his famous mission into our island, toward the close of the sixth century. It was no sudden thought, but the effect of much deliberation. Even be-

Gregory's
Mission to
Britain.

fore his consecration at Rome, walking one day in the forum, he saw some very handsome youths exposed to sale. Asking of what country they were, he was informed they were of the island of Britain. "Are the inhabitants of that island Christians or Pagans?" They are Pagans, was the reply. Alas! said he, deeply sighing, that the prince of darkness should possess countenances so luminous, and that so fair a front should carry minds destitute of eternal grace. What is the name of the nation? Angli, it was said. In truth they have angelic countenances, and it is a pity they should not be coheirs with angels in heaven. What is the province from which they come? Deira, that is Northumberland, he was told. It is well, said he, De ira, snatched from the wrath of God, and called to the mercy of Christ. "What is the name of their king?" Ella, was the answer. Playing upon the name, "Alleluia should be sung to God in those regions."§ Impressed with the importance of the object, he earnestly entreated the then Roman bishop to send a mission to the island, offering himself as one ready for the task. Nothing but the officious benevolence of the Roman citizens prevented the work at that time. Gregory was too much beloved at Rome to be allowed to leave it.

It was the character of Gregory to pursue with unwearied attention any plan or scheme of piety or discipline, which he had once conceived. After his consecration in the year 595, he directed a presbyter, whom he had sent into France, to instruct

* I leave to fastidious sceptics, such as the historian Hume, to sneer at Gregory's want of taste in these several allusions. The candid reader will impute them to the times, not to the man; and the devout and charitable will adore the goodness of God, which was beginning to provide such precious benefits for our country; benefits, which call for ceaseless gratitude to the Author of all good, and should excite the memory of the Roman prelate to our latest posterity. An elegant epigram on Milton, by a countryman of Gregory, turns on the same conceit:

Ut mens, forma, decor, facies, mox, et plotas sic,

Non Anglus, verum hercle, Angelus ipse foret.

* Bede.

† See Warner's Ecol. Hist. towards the beginning.

‡ Bede.

some young Saxons of seventeen or eighteen years of age, in Mission to England, Christianity. He intended to A. D. 597. prepare them for the mission into our island; and in the year 597 he actually sent missionaries hither. They were a number of monks, at the head of whom was one named Augustine. In obedience to Gregory's directions, they proceeded on their journey; but their hearts failed them, when they reflected on the difficulties and dangers to which they thought themselves likely to be exposed. The faith and zeal and simplicity of a Christian missionary were at this time grown rare in the world; and Augustine was sent back by the rest, to entreat Gregory to discharge them from the service. The prelate wrote exhortatory letters, advising them to proceed in confidence of Divine aid. He informed them, that it had been better not to have begun a good work, than to recede from it afterwards. He entreated them not to be deterred by the labour of the journey, nor by the breath of malevolence. He set before them the heavenly prospects, and prayed that he himself might see the fruit of their labour in the eternal country. For though, says he, I cannot labour with you, may I at the same time be found in the joy of retribution, because I am willing to labour! Nor did he neglect any means proper to accommodate the missionaries: he recommended them to the attention of Etherius, bishop of Arles, and secured them all the assistance in France, that might expedite their passage into Britain, and every convenience which they needed. Thus animated, they arrived in Britain.*

There was, however, a remarkable concurrence of providential circumstances which facilitated the work, and gave it a mere expeditious success than might have been expected from appearances. It is very observable, how much the Lord has made use of women in the propagation of the Gospel among idolaters. To former instances of this sort, we must add, that two queens were concerned in this work, one of whom was the infamous Brunehaut, whose correspondence with Gregory has been noticed. Desirous to cover her vices by the appearance of religion, she had, at Gregory's request, given the missionaries every possible assistance. The other, a character on whom the mind will dwell with pleasure, was Bertha, the

only daughter of Caribert, king of Paris, a descendant of Clovis. Ethelbert, to whom she had been married in his father's lifetime, was now king of Kent, and one of the most wise and powerful of the Saxon princes. He had not been allowed to marry the French princess but on the express stipulation, that she should be permitted to make free profession of Christianity, in which she had been educated. She brought over with her a French bishop to the court of Dunelm, now Canterbury. Her principles were firm and sound: her conduct was worthy of the Christian name; and her influence over her husband was considerable. Her zealous piety was not inferior to that of the queen Clovis, which had been attended with such happy consequences in France; and every thing conspired to favour the missionaries.

Ethelbert assigned Augustine a habitation in the isle of Thanet. Here he remained at first with his associates, who were nearly forty. By the direction of Gregory, they had taken with them French interpreters, by whose means they informed the king, that they were come from Rome,* and brought him the best tidings in the world, eternal life to those who received them, and the endless enjoyment of life with the living and true God. After some days, Ethelbert paid them a visit; but being apprehensive of enchantments, he took care to receive them in the open air, where he thought he should be safer than in a house. The missionaries met him, singing litanies for their own salvation, and that of those for whose sake they came hither.† Sitting down, by the king's direction, they preached to him and his attendants the word of life. I cannot produce the smallest extract of the sermon; but that it explained the fundamentals, at least, of the Gospel, there seems no reason to doubt. One may form some idea of it by the king's answer, which was to this effect, "They are fine words and promises, which ye bring, but because they are new and uncertain, I cannot afford my assent to them, nor relinquish those religious practices which I

* Bede, B. I. Ep. 25, &c.

† As I write not the history of superstition, but of Christian religion, I think not myself obliged to copy all the accounts I meet with in ancient records which relate to the former. Justice, in the extreme, has been done to them by other writers.

myself, together with all the English nation, have for so long a time observed. But as ye are come hither from a great distance, and as I seem to discover that ye are willing to communicate to us those things, which ye believe to be true and most excellent, we are not willing to distrust you, but rather to receive you in a friendly manner, and to afford you what may be necessary for your support; nor do we hinder you from uniting all, whom ye can persuade by preaching, to the faith of your religion." He gave them a mansion in the royal city of Canterbury, with all necessary accommodations, and the license of preaching the word. As they approached the city, they sang in concert this litany; We pray thee, O Lord, in all thy mercy, that thine anger and thy fury may be removed from this city, and from thy holy house, because we have sinned. Alleluia.

Certainly the human mind was in a debased and childish state at this time throughout a great part of the world. It had long been sinking in its powers and taste. The heathen philosophers and orators of these times appear no way superior to Christian authors and pastors, in the use and cultivation of the understanding. Such men as Gregory and his missionaries should not be compared with Cicero and Demosthenes, but with their own contemporaries; and had this been done by writers who treat them with perfect contempt, the injustice of that contempt would have appeared. It must be expected that the work of divine grace in different ages, will, in its effects and manifestations, exhibit the complexion and colour of the objects with which it is surrounded. The subtlety of Satan will not fail to take every possible advantage of his circumstance, and I can believe that even more superstitions than those recorded by Bede attended the labours of the Roman missionaries. In our own times of refinement, evils far more plausible, but not less pernicious, accompany the same salutary work. I have not, however, observed any thing idolatrous, or otherwise directly subversive of Christianity, to have yet prevailed in any of the fashionable superstitions. These things being premised, let us consider what must probably was the doctrine preached by Augustine; I say probably, since the wretched narratives from which I draw my information have given no account. That eternal salvation and for-

givenness of sin by the blood of the Lamb, was his capital doctrine, seems evident in a great measure from Ethelbert's observation of the good news which they brought. I may still more confidently say, that his sermon was not a system of moral duties. For how could that be called good news? All the difficulty with Ethelbert was, to believe what they promised; the very same difficulty which strikes all unrenewed minds at the first hearing of the Gospel. And when to this we add what we certainly know of Gregory's sentiments, and consider Augustine as preaching according to his views, the evidence seems to rise even beyond probability. Ethelbert, a prudent and sensible prince, though, as yet at least, by no means convinced of the truth of Christianity, sees no suspicious mark in the language and conduct of the preachers. The air of genuine sincerity is simple, and above the possibility of imitation. Candid and intelligent minds perceive it almost intuitively. The king of Kent could see no selfish motive that was likely to influence these men. They spake with an earnestness that showed their own conviction of the excellency of their doctrine, and their desire of profiting their fellow-creatures. Not an atom of gain was to be acquired to the See of Rome: the whole mission was disinterested. Hence the candid prince was induced to give them countenance; and the Gospel appears to have been preached by these missionaries with plainness and sincerity.

Their conduct at Canterbury was correspondent to these beginnings. They prayed, fasted, watched, preached the word of life to all, as opportunity served: they lived as men above the world: received nothing from those whom they taught, except necessities: they practised what they taught, and showed a readiness to suffer, or even to die, for the truth which they preached. Some believed and were baptized, admiring their innocent lives, and tasting the sweetness of their doctrine. Near the city there was an old church, built in the times of the Romans, in which queen Bertha was wont to pray. In this the missionaries first held their assemblies, sang, prayed, preached, and baptized, till the king himself being converted to the faith,*

* I hope Bede's expression (H. I. Ep. 26.) is true in the proper sense of the words.

they obtained a larger license for preaching every where, and of building or repairing churches. When he himself, among others, delighted with the holiness of their lives, and the preciousness of Gospel promises, confirmed by many miracles,* believed and was baptized, numbers crowded to hear, and received the word. The king, congratulating the new converts, declared that he would compel no man to become a Christian; however he embraced those who did so with a more intimate affection as fellow-heirs of the grace of life. For the missionaries had taught him, that the service of Christ ought to be voluntary, not compulsive. He now gave to them a settlement in Canterbury, suited to their station, with all necessary accommodations.

Augustine returning into France, received ordination, as the archbishop of the English nation, from the bishop of Arles, and returning into Britain, sent Laurentius the presbyter, and Peter the monk, to acquaint Gregory with his success, and to receive answers to various questions.

To his inquiries concerning the maintenance of the clergy, Gregory answered, that the donations made to the Church were, by the customs of the Roman See, divided into four portions, one for the bishop and his family to support hospitality, a second to the clergy, a third to the poor, a fourth to the reparation of churches: that as the pastors were all monks, they ought to live in common, with a remarkable exception, which proves that the absolute prohibition of marriage, one of the marks of Antichrist,† was not yet enjoined the clergy, namely, that those of them who preferred the marriage state, might be allowed to marry, and receive their maintenance out of the monastery. To another question, which related to the diversity of customs and liturgies in different churches, the answer of Gregory was liberal; namely, that the new bishop was not bound to follow the precedent of Rome, but that he might se-

lect whatever parts or rules appeared the most eligible, and best adapted to promote the piety of the infant church of England, and compose them into a system for its use. A number of other questions and answers are recorded likewise, too uninteresting to deserve a place here.* Yet amidst the childish superstition of the times, the enlightened mind of Gregory appears; and his occasional comment on St. Paul's words, concerning the law in his members warring against the law of his mind, in which the bishop understands the Apostle as describing himself to be free and enslaved at the same time, with a double respect to his natural and spiritual state, evinces the solidity of his evangelical knowledge.

Augustine having intimated, that the harvest was plenteous, but that the labourers were few, Gregory sent him more missionaries, and directed him to constitute a bishop at York, who might have other subordinate bishops; yet, in such a manner, that Augustine of Canterbury should be metropolitan of all England. Such were the rudiments of the English church.—Gregory has been censured for excessive eagerness in settling a plan of ecclesiastical government for places as yet not in the least evangelized: and it must be owned, that this extreme care of subordination and uniformity does seem premature; but the spirit of the times favoured such hasty external institutions.

Gregory thought long and deeply of this his favourite infant Church; and wrote to Mellitus, one of the missionaries going to Britain, an account of the fruits of his meditations; which were,† that the idol-temples being purged of their uncleanness, should be converted into churches for the use of the natives, in which they might worship God, according to the Gospel. And reflecting that they had been wont to sacrifice to demons, and in their sacrifices to indulge themselves in feasts, he directs that, setting apart all sacrifices, and whatever was connected with idolatry, they might be allowed on the day of the Church's dedication, or on the martyrdom of Saints, to make booths for themselves in the neighbourhood of the churches, and enjoy themselves in temperate banquets. This latter direction appears dangerous; the reason he assigns for it is, that the English, if they found their usual entertain-

* What shall be said concerning these miracles? The credulity of that age should not lead one to deny all that is said of them. It was a new scene: Evangelists were preaching among pagans. Certain it is, that every one concerned in those scenes believed their reality.

† 1 Tim. iv. 3.

* Bede, B. I. C. 27.

† Ibid. 30.

ments to be altogether prohibited, might be induced to relapse into idolatry. I cannot compare Gregory's compliances to the Jesuitical artifices practised in after ages among the Chinese, because it appears that idolatry was absolutely prohibited, and the real Christian religion taught in Britain: but a man who knew human nature so well as this bishop did, might have foreseen the practical excesses which his licence would encourage, and should have committed to God himself the success of his own cause among the English.

Hearing from Augustine of his miraculous powers, Gregory, who seems to have entertained no doubt of their reality, cautions him excellently against pride and presumption on their account, informs him that they were given him more for the sake of the new converts than of himself, and teaches him the all-important lesson of humility. He wrote also to Ethelbert, to congratulate, instruct, and exhort him, setting before him the example of the great Constantine, and pressing him to extend the propagation of the Gospel.* His zeal was much animated by

the near prospect which he himself had of the end of the world, and of which he failed not to inform the king of Kent:† the latter reigned fifty years, A. D. 616, and died in 616. As a statesman he was great, as a Christian greater still. And few princes in any age were richer blessings to their subjects than Ethelbert and Bertha.

But this fine gold was not without some alloy! Before these events there existed, in Wales particularly, a British Church. Augustine willing to establish a uniformity of discipline and customs in the island, invited the Welsh bishops to a conference, and began to admonish them to enter into Christian peace and concord, that with hearts united they might join in evangelizing the pagans. The Britons observed Easter at a season different from that of the Roman Church, and did many other things contrary to her customs. The conference proved fruitless; the Britons would hearken to no prayers or exhortations; and Augustine in the close had recourse to a miraculous sign.† A blind man was introduced to be healed. We are told that the Britons had no success; but that Augustine's prayers were heard, and his sight was restored. The Britons were induced to confess, that Augustine was sent of God, but pleaded the obstinacy of their people, as a reason for their non-compliance.—A second synod was appointed, attended by seven British bishops, and many of their learned men, belonging to the famous monastery at Bangor, of which Dinoh was at that time the abbot. Before these came to the synod, they asked the advice of a person of reputed sanctity, whether they should give up their own traditions on the authority of Augustine or not. Let humility, said he, be the test, and if you find, when you come to the synod, that he rises up to you at your approach, obey him; if not, let him be despised by you. On so precarious an evidence, it seems, did he rest the proof of humility. It happened, that Augustine continued sitting on their arrival, which might easily have taken place without any intentional insult: the Britons were however incensed, and

* Hume Chap. I. of his History of England represents this exhortation to extend the propagation of the Gospel as inconsistent with the conduct of Augustine, "who had thought proper, in the commencement of his mission, to assume the assurance of the greatest humility." "True it is that men, more malignant than intelligent in Christian history, pervert facts, and represent points merely positional in their moderate conduct. The touch is neither Constantine, nor Theodosius nor Gregory, nor any of the arguments, ever compelled any man to become a Christian, either in the beginning or progress of religion. Nor does any thing of the kind appear in Gregory's letter to Ethelbert. But he (like Theodosius, I suspect) thought that the worship of idols should be destroyed. Men were allowed to remain about all their days from Christianity if they pleased. Forced conversions, like those of pagans in after ages, were as yet unknown, and persecution, the other mark of Antiquity, as yet existed not in the Church. It is very possible that the mildest spirit of our times may be disgusted with that part of the conduct of Theodosius and Gregory, which related to the destruction of idols, and call it persecution. Be it so. I have in Chap. viii. Cent. iv. examined this point with as much exactness as I can. But let our men of sincere piety and fervent charity for the good of souls, be represented as if they were hypocritical in their moderation at first, and as if they intended to establish tyranny afterwards. Their plan was, whether it be agreeable to present religious maxims or not, to compel no man to receive Christianity, and at the same time to render the practice of idolatry impardonable. I believe many, who have written against them

as persecutors, have not distinctly understood this distinction. All I contend for here is this, they acted consistently and uprightly.

† Gregory had already written to queen Bertha, and stimulated her zeal to labour for the conversion of her husband.—Id. C. 32.

+ Bed. B. II. C. 2.

would hearken to no terms of reconciliation. Augustine proposed to them to agree with him only in three things, leaving other points of difference undecided, namely, to observe Easter at the same time with the rest of the Christian world, to administer baptism after the Roman manner, and to join with Augustine in preaching the Gospel to the English. In all other things, says he, we will bear you with patience. The Britons were inexorable, and refused to acknowledge his authority. "If you will not have peace with brethren, said the archbishop of Canterbury, roused at length into an unbecoming warmth, you will have war with enemies; and if you will not preach to the English the way of life, you will suffer death at their hands." It happened afterwards, that, in an invasion of the Pagan Saxons of the North, the Bangorian monks were cruelly destroyed, though long after the death of Augustine. He died in peaceable possession of the See of Canterbury, after having lived to see the Gospel propagated with increasing success. He ordained Mellitus and Justus bishops; London was brought into the pale of the Church, and the southern parts of the island found the benefit of his labours, and of those of his auxiliaries.

I shall close the story of English affairs with the death of Augustine, which happened early in the 7th century. And as the ground I am now upon has been disputed, I am willing to lay open all the information which antiquity can give us. Let us hear some other accounts of these transactions.

Writers, who have been studious of the honour of our country, tell us, that when Augustine came into England he found seven bishops and an archbishop supplied with godly governors and abbots, and that the church was in goodly order, at Bangor particularly: that Dinoh the abbot showed Augustine that they owed him no subjection: that their bishops had been independent of Rome: that the bishops of Rome had no more right to their obedience than other Christians had, and that the bishop of Caerleon upon Usk was their proper superior;* and that in revenge for this honest assertion of their independency, the Kentish king procured the invasion and slaughter of the British monks mentioned above.

How Christianity was afterwards propagated in our island, and how the disputes between the Roman and British churches terminated, will properly fall under our consideration hereafter. In the mean time, the injustice of a certain writer^a to the memory of Gregory, in accusing him of exercising tyranny over the British Church is very glaring. We have, by an early association of ideas, been so habituated to condemn every thing that is Roman in religion, that we are not easily open to conviction on this subject. It should, however, be remembered, that not the least revenue could accrue to Gregory from the conversion of Britain; nor did he suggest or intimate any lucrative plan, directly or indirectly. If there were any improper steps taken, they must not be charged to a selfish or interested spirit, such as that which has since animated the papacy. The doctrines avowedly and earnestly taught by Gregory and his followers, were the doctrines of Grace; and though no account of the faith of the Welsh monks is given us, there is great reason on account of the Pelagian leaven of our island, to fear it was not so truly Christian as that of Gregory. That they were uncharitable, appears incontestable from their neglect of the Saxon pagans, and their obstinate refusal to hearken to any advice on that head. And the reader has already had a view of their manners, very different from the flattering account of Galfredus. The extent of the British Church, before the arrival of Augustine, was so inconsiderable, that when Gregory planned the hierarchy of this island, it is probable he knew little of the very existence of such a Church. The fault of ambitious encroachment must, therefore be laid to Augustine. Seduced he undoubtedly was, according to the common superstition of the age, by an excessive zeal for uniformity. And that admirable method of uniting zeal for establishments with a spirit of toleration, which was discovered toward the close of the last century, was as yet unknown. The Britons had been independent, and they had a right to continue so; but I believe, from all appearances, that Augustine's desire to make a connexion with the Romans sprang from charitable views.

What could be the meaning of his wishing the Britons to baptize after the

* Galfredus Monometensis, B. IV. C. 12. See Nicholls on the Common Prayer.

^a Bower's Lives of Popes, Vol. II. Gregory.

Roman manner! This question has exercised the critical talents of authors. After all, as baptism by trinal immersion was then the Roman mode, this seems to give the most natural account of the circumstance.

The charge of Galfridus, in accusing the Romans of employing the pagans to murder the British, is too absurd to merit any serious notice. Augustine died long before it happened. Gregory himself was deceased before the controversies between Augustine and Dinoh took place. He has been accused of extreme inconsistency, in being imperious toward heretics, and indulgent toward pagans* and Jews. But a more exact acquaintance with cases would enable men to form a better judgment. Gregory, like all real good men, was averse to use violent methods in proselyting; he knew that conversion, if sincere, must be voluntary. But when men once have been received into the Christian pale, the same zeal which laboured for their conversion, is studious for their uniform attachment to Christian fundamentals. It was no breach of charity in Gregory to attempt to hinder the promotion of a Donatist in the Christian church in Africa, and such an attempt was very consistent with that charity which forbade the persecution of the Jews.

On the whole, Gregory's conduct with respect to our island appears one of the most shining efforts of Christian charity. His benevolence, in general, acted handsomely; and the real establishment of Christianity was, under God, effected by their means. There was a stain of rivalry and jealousy, as we have seen, which appeared in their conduct; but they were men.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WORKS OF GREGORY.

This great prelate, worn out at length with labours and diseases, slept in Jesus in the year 604,† after he had enjoyed, shall I say—or endured, his bishopric thirteen years and six months. No man in any age ever gave himself up more completely to the service of God, and the benefit of his fellow-

creatures. Power in him was a voluntary servitude, undertaken not for himself, but for all the world. Even the growth of superstition, with which he was strongly infected, while it secured to him the cheerful obedience of the laity, contributed nothing to his ease or secular emolument. The belief of the Roman bishops' succession to Peter, which he found prevalent in Europe, was accidentally strengthened by his eminent piety and his laborious virtues.

Had he even been disposed to extend his authority to much greater lengths, all the world would have been prone to submit to his decrees; so firmly was the opinion of his integrity established among men. His conscience, however, would not suffer him to carry anything farther than precedents had sanctioned; and who, especially in an age of superstitious credulity, could doubt the justice of his pretensions, while the pre-eminence was so painful, so disinterested, and so beneficially exerted?

For I cannot persuade myself to call him Pope. He pretended not to anything like infallibility, nor did he ever attempt any thing like a secular domination. The seeds of Antichrist were vigorously shooting indeed; and the reputation of Gregory doubtless contributed much to mature the poisonous plant. But idolatry, spiritual tyranny, and the doctrine of the merit of works, the three discriminating marks of the papacy, had, as yet, no settled establishment at Rome. Had this man lived in our age, he would doubtless have beheld, with astonishment, on the one hand, the worldly spirit of many Christian pastors so called, and on the other the impiety of numerous infidels who are continually railing against the religious. His mind, naturally vigorous, industrious and active, would doubtless have shaken off the gloom and credulity of superstition; but he would have been amazed to hear the pompous pretences to philosophy, in which every juvenile scientist indulges himself. He would have examined the fruits, and have been at a loss to conceive with what propriety the term philosopher could be applied to sceptics, blasphemers, atheists, levellers, and sensualists. He would, as a bishop, have tried what could be done to stem the torrent, and have exerted in the way of discipline, which was his peculiar talent, his usual address, mildness and resolution. He would have mourned over

* Bower. † Fleury, Vol. iv. B. 221v. 43.

his beloved England,* if he had seen her so absurdly enslaved to ideas of mistaken liberty, as to spurn at decent rules of discipline, and to discountenance, as tyranny, godly attempts to introduce and support them. He would have been ready to say, "this people are enemies to their own good;" he would have pitied them, wept and consoled himself with his usual refuge, the views of a better world, and have done what good was still in his power, by the example of a holy life, by painful preaching, and by pious writings.

Of these last we have many still extant. He particularly excelled in devotional composition. Litanies had

The Litany compiled by Gregory.

been used in the West before his time, in calamitous seasons, as during plague or famine. These were collected,

and the choicest parts selected from them, and compiled, through the care of Gregory, into one large litany, not much different from that used by the Church of England at this day. It was much corrupted afterwards in the popish times, was reformed by Hermanus, archbishop of Cologne, in the days of Luther, and afterwards improved by our reformers.

But the Church of England is not only indebted to Gregory for the Litany. In his Sacramentary he embodied the collects of the ancient Church, and improved old, or made new ones. Galasius, before him, had appointed public prayers, composed by himself or others. These were all placed in the offices by Gregory. And by a comparison of our Book of Common Prayer with his Sacramentary, it is evident, that almost all the collects for Sundays, and the principal festivals in the Church of England, were taken out of the latter. To me it appears to be an advantage, that our reformers followed antiquity so much in the work. The purification of the ancient services from the corrupt and idolatrous mixtures of popery, was as strong an indication of their judgment as the composition of prayers altogether new could have been, which, however, they scrupled not to introduce in

various parts of the Liturgy. From the brief account I have given,* it appears, that the Service of our Church is far more ancient than the Roman Missal, properly speaking. And whoever has attended to the superlative simplicity, fervour, and energy of the prayers, and of the collects particularly, will have no hesitation in concluding, that they must have been composed in a time of true evangelical light and godliness. It is impossible indeed to say how early some parts of the Liturgy were written; but doubtless they are of very high antiquity. Many persons, in dark times, and under the disadvantage of slothful ignorant pastors, have been enlightened and nourished through their medium, and not a few. I trust, of my readers can justly confess with me, how much their devotion has been assisted by the public use of them. Let any unprejudiced person compare with the Liturgy several forms of prayer composed in modern times, and he will find an emotion to attend the former, of which the latter is destitute. The present age is certainly much tinctured, in general, with a sceptical, philosophic spirit, which in its nature is not favourable to the production of devotional compositions.

The historical evidence hence resulting of the religious spirit of the times is great. The Western Church was far from being wholly corrupt in the close of the sixth century.† The doctrines of grace revived by Augustine were still predominant: divine life was much clogged indeed with the asthma of superstition; but its pulse was yet vigorous. I close this digression, if it may be called one, with remarking, that the continued use of these liturgies in the churches of the West, demonstrates the concurrent testimony of antiquity in favour of evangelical doctrine.

Of Gregory's epistles nothing more is needful to be added to the numerous extracts from them, which have supplied me with materials for his history.

His exposition of the book of Job is very voluminous. In a letter to Leander prefixed to it, he speaks of the tripartite sense, according to the ideas of Augustine, with sufficient justness and accuracy; yet through fondness for system

Gregory's exposition of the book of Job.

* The gratitude of Bede has (B. II. C. 1. Ecc. Hist.) led him to apply to Gregory the words of St. Paul in regard to the Corinthians. As an Englishman who felt his obligations to Gregory, he says, "the seal of his apostleship are we in the Lord." The testimony of antiquity to Gregory's beneficent piety toward this island is uniform.

* Nicholls on B. of Com. Prayer.

† That beautiful and sublime ode, called *Te Deum*, ascribed, though not with certainty, to Ambrose, was incontestably used in the Church before the middle of the sixth century.

he carries his point too far, so as to destroy sometimes the literal sense, after the vicious mode of Origen. We may believe him, when he describes the correspondence of the subject to his own bodily affections; and he frankly owns his neglect of language and style. Few readers will be tempted to search the work throughout, on account of the heaviness of his manner, and the total want of elegance. Yet piety and humility are every where predominant; and though it can by no means be called a just commentary on the book of Job, he in general avoids deviations from the analogy of faith, by the evangelical purity of his frame and temper, and he had, I doubt not, real communion with God in the work. Let us hear his humble confession at the close; it deserves the serious notice of authors, and in that most salutary science of self-knowledge demonstrates a proficiency worthy of a follower of Augustine.

"Having finished my work, I see I must return to myself. The human mind is frequently bewildered, even when it attempts to speak correctly. For while we study propriety of language, we are drawn out of ourselves, and are apt to lose simplicity. From speaking in public let me return to the court of the heart; let me call my thoughts to a serious consultation with a view to discern myself, that I may observe whether I have spoken evil inadvertently, or good in a wrong spirit. For then only is real good spoken in a right spirit, when we mean by it to please him alone from whom we receive it. I am not conscious of having said evil; yet I will not maintain that I am absolutely innocent in this respect. The good which I have spoken I have received from above, and it is less good, through my sinfulness. For, averting my contemplation from words and sentences, the leaves and branches, and narrowly inspecting the root of my intention, I know that I meant earnestly to please God: but the desire of human praise insensibly mixes with this intention. I discover this slowly and afterwards, and find that the execution corresponds not with the first intention. While we really mean to please God at first, the love of human praise steals into the mind, and overtakes and accompanies the pure design; as in eating, what was begun through necessity and in innocence, terminates too often in excess. If we are strictly examined by the divine Judge, how can we escape!

Our evils are our own without mixture, and our good things are defiled with impurity. What I feel within, I lay open to my reader. In expounding I have not concealed what I think; in confessing I hide not what I suffer.—I beg every reader to pray for me. If the value of his prayers and of my exposition be compared, he will have the advantage. He receives from me only words; but repays me with tears of supplication."

His pastoral care is a monument of the author's intense seriousness. I have already observed in many Christian pastors, and in Gregory as eminently as in most, a very strong sense of the importance of the clerical office, which rebukes the presumption of moderns more keenly than any words of mine can do. With the ancients scarcely any person, however qualified, seemed adequate to the cure of souls; with us every stripling undertakes it without fear or hesitation. The treatise itself deserves to be read throughout by every candidate for the pastoral office. I know not how to select any parts of it particularly, and its brevity forbids and discourages all attempts at abridgment.*

The exposition of the Canticles is worthy of the godly spirit of Gregory. I shall hazard a quotation or two, which I doubt not will correspond with the sensations of minds acquainted spiritually with Jesus Christ, however the profane may ridicule, and the phlegmatic may censure. It is worth while to show, that a spirit of union with Christ has ever been felt in his Church.

On the first verse of the Canticles he says, "Let him whom I love above all, say alone, let him come to me, that he may touch me with the sweetness of his inspiration. For when I feel his influence, I leave myself by a sudden change, and being melted am transformed into his likeness. The holy mind is disgusted with all things which it feels from the

Gregory's
pastoral
care.

Gregory's
exposition
of the
Canticles.

* Should the young candidate for the ministry object, as he justly may, the difficulty of meeting with this work of Gregory, let him substitute in its place Bishop Burnett's treatise on the same subject. It is to be lamented that so valuable a book is so little read and known, and that while the public taste has called for repeated editions of inflammatory politics, this treasure of pastoral information is dwindled into an oblivion little short of contempt.

body, and desires to become altogether spiritual; and while sensual objects murmur around, it flies into spiritual things, and desires to hide itself in them. Therefore it desires the loving kindness of the Lord, because without that it feels no power to approach him."

On the words, "draw me, we will run after thee," he observes, "Divine grace prevents us. He, who is drawn, runs, because being strengthened by divine love he passes over all obstacles."

The defective taste and learning of his age forbid us to expect any very accurate and solid exposition of so difficult a prophet as Ezekiel. In fact, it is in occasional passages, independent of system, that Gregory shines. I single out a passage as an instance of this;* "Generally those who most excel in divine contemplation, are most oppressed with temptation. By the first the soul is lifted up to God, by the second it is pressed down into itself. Were it not for this the mind would fall into pride. There is, by the divine disposition, a wonderful temperature in this subject, that the saint may neither rise too high nor sink too low."

Observe how divinely, in one of his homilies on the Gospels,† he speaks concerning the teaching of the Holy Spirit. On the words in St. John's Gospel, he (the Spirit) shall teach you all things, he says, "Unless the Spirit be with the heart of the hearer, the word of the teacher is barren. Let no man attribute to the teacher what he understands from his mouth; for, unless there be an internal teacher, the tongue of the external one labours in vain. Why is there such a difference in the sensations of hearers, all hearing the same words? It is to be ascribed to this special teaching. John himself in his epistle teaches the same, 'the anointing teaches you of all things.'"^{*} It is plain that the Spirit of the Lord was not departed, as yet, from the Roman church, while his internal instructions, despised so fearlessly by the profane, and scrutinized so malignantly by many orthodox professors in our days, were regarded with so much simplicity and reverence.

His dialogues, if indeed they be his, or be not much interpolated, dishonour his memory by the excess of superstition.

Thus far of the first of the Gregories;

it will not be saying enough in his praise, though it is a truth, that it would have been to the advantage of the reputation of the Roman Church if he had been the last of that name.

CHAPTER IX.

WRITERS OF THIS CENTURY.

FULGENTIUS adorned the beginning, and Gregory the close of this century, which produced no other authors of equal merit. And the decay in learning and knowledge was so great, that I shall detain the reader a very little time on this article.

Ennodius, bishop of Pavia, wrote against those, who affirmed, that man could only choose evil. With gross ignorance of the connexion and scope of St. Paul's argument, he quotes his words in the Epistle to the Romans, ch. vii. as favourable to his views, "For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not:" thus ascribing to man, as such, what the apostle evidently speaks of as descriptive of the regenerate. He maintains that man by nature has power to turn himself to God, and deduces from the contrary doctrine the consequences which the advocates for the doctrine of free-will in all ages have done from the days of Cicero, who, it is remarkable, reasons exactly in the same manner.

On the other hand, John Maxentius, a Seythian monk, in company with a number of monks, his brethren, strenuously defended the doctrines of grace. In a confession of their faith is this sentence: "that free-will, since the entrance of sin, has of itself no other power but that of choosing some carnal good and pleasure,"^{*} and that it can neither desire nor will, nor do anything for eternal life, but by the operation of the Holy Spirit."

So remarkable a confession would seem to show some distinct knowledge of the depravity of the heart. Maxentius and his brethren were ill treated by Hormisdas, bishop of Rome, a bold and dexterous politician, of whose theological knowledge and practical piety I find no proofs. He accused them of turbulence and self-conceit, and after a year's attendance at Rome they were expelled thence by his

* Tom. II. Homil. on Ezek. xiv.

† Tom. II. p. 451.

* Du Pin, Cent. 6th.

order. I cannot find that Hormisdas gave any decided opinion on the subject himself; probably he had never studied it; but he acted imperiously and decisively. *Maximian* wrote with vigour in defence of the doctrines of grace, and I wish I could gratify the reader with a larger account of a man, who was counted worthy to suffer shame for the faith of Christ. The controversy between the defenders of grace and of human powers was still alive, and the Western Church continued still divided upon it.

Fascendus, bishop of Hermiana in Africa, deserves to be mentioned for the sake of one sentence: "The faithful, in receiving the Sacrament of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, receive his body and his blood; not that the bread is properly his body, and the cup his blood; but because they contain in them the mystery of the body and blood of Jesus Christ."^{*} Though it makes no part of our system to combate the particular points of poetry, I could not omit so clear a testimony against transubstantiation.

The Western Church is indebted for

historical information to Gregory of Tours; the Eastern, to Evagrius. It must be confessed that they are inelegant and injudicious writers. They had the literary taste of this century.

The truly evangelical second council of Orange has been already reviewed. The second council of of Mascon, held in 585, is worthy of notice.

They were very zealous for the observation of Sunday.

Let none follow any business on this day, say they; let none yoke oxen, or prosecute

The second council of Mascon, A. D. 585.

suits of law; but let all the world apply themselves to sing the praises of God. They decree penalties against sabbath-breakers. An advocate, who was guilty of the crime, was to be driven from the bar; a peasant or a slave to receive some stripes. They exhort Christians also to spend the evening of Sunday in prayers. They forbid bishops to keep birds and dogs for game. They ordain the celebration of a Synod every three years in a place appointed by the bishop of Lyons and king Gontranus. A proof may hence be drawn that some spirit of genuine religion was still preserved in France.

* Du Pin, Fascendus.

CENTURY VII.

CHAPTER I.

THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

THE diversity of circumstances in different ages of the Church constantly admonishes an historian, who loves method and perspicuity, to vary the arrangement of his materials. No abstract rules, but the circumstances of each period, should direct him in this matter. In the century before us, barren and unpromising as it is for the most part, Great Britain shone with distinguished lustre. As she was a world within herself, her ecclesiastical affairs were little connected with those of the Continent. Hence the propriety of reviewing them by themselves.—In this subject I shall closely follow the venerable Bede, whose narration extends to the year 731.—Though much of his history is fabulous and superstitious, it is still of the greatest value, because it is the only light which we have concerning the progress of the Gospel in our own country for several generations; and some rays of truth, piety, and good sense, now and then break out in the historian amidst the clouds of legendary romance.

After the death of Augustine, Laurentius, the first archbishop of Canterbury, whom he had ordained, succeeded to that See. He trode* in the steps of his predecessor, and laboured to promote the best interests of the English by frequent preaching of the word, and by a diligent and useful example. I doubt not the sincerity of this prelate; though seduced by the charms of a nominal unity, he laboured, as the first missionary Augustine had done, to bring the British Churches to a conformity with the Church of Rome. He was actuated by the same subtle spirit of selfish ambition, of which even the best men in all ages have not been void; it operates imperceptibly, through the native energy of in-dwelling sin. The papist, the national churchman, and the sectary, are each liable to its influence, though in truly regenerate

spirits there exists, likewise, a divine principle, by the operation of which the sordid views of secular gain are entirely excluded. In this manner I would appreciate the characters of the Romish missionaries in England. Their disinterested labours, just views of Christian doctrine, and holy and unblemished lives, ought to have exempted them from the intemperate censures of writers, who seem to think an indiscriminate aversion to the Church of Rome to be one of the principal excellencies of a protestant historian.*

Laurentius, in conjunction with Mellitus, bishop of London, and Justus, bishop of Rochester, endeavoured to reduce the "Scots, who inhabited Ireland"† to a conformity with the English Church. The three prelates wrote to them with this view, and declared themselves to be sent by the Roman See to propagate the Gospel among the pagan nations. Laurentius complained of the bigotry of a certain Irish bishop, who, coming to Canterbury, refused to eat at the same table, or even in the same house with him. The archbishop could not prevail either with the Britons or with the Irish to enter into his views. "Even the present times, says our author, declare how little success he had." At the period in which Bede concludes his history, the greatest part of the British churches remained still distinguished from the English. The bishops of Rome continued to superintend the latter; and while Ethelbert lived, the Gospel flourished. This prince died after a reign of fifty-six years, twenty-one years after he had embraced Christianity, and was buried by the side of his deceased queen Bertha. Among other benefits which the English derived from him, there was a code of laws form-

* I advert, particularly, to Bower's Lives of the Popes, and to Warner's Ecclesiastical History of our own country. Their laborious collection of facts deserves commendation. I avail myself of all the helps which offer, for the supply of materials.—But, I mean to extol the Church of Christ, wherever I can find her; nor should a Roman dress, when she appears in it, convey any prejudice to my mind.

† Bede's own words, which demonstrate that the Irish were anciently called Scots.

ed after the example of the Romans,* which was still extant in Bede's time, and was particularly calculated to protect the persons and property of the Church.

His son and successor Eadbald not only despised Christianity, but also lived in incest with his father's wife. Whence all, who had embraced the Gospel through motives purely secular, were induced to relapse into idolatry. Sæbereth, king of the East Saxons, who had followed the example of Ethelbert who was his uncle, being deceased, his three sons became joint heirs of his kingdom. Immediately they resumed the idolatry, which they had intermitted a little in their father's lifetime, and encouraged their subjects to do the same. These princes observing the bishop of London to distribute the bread of the Eucharist in the church, asked why he did not give it to them as he had done to their father, and as he did at that very time to the people. "If you will be washed, replied Mellitus, in the same laver of regeneration in which your father was, you may partake of the same sacred bread; but if ye despise the laver of life, ye cannot partake of the bread of life." We will not, said they, enter into that fountain; we do not know that we need it, yet we choose to eat of that bread. In vain did the upright pastor seriously and diligently admonish them, that it was not possible for any person remaining uncleansed from sin to partake of the communion: in a rage they declared, "If you will not gratify us in so small a matter, you shall not remain in our province." They thereupon ordered him to be gone with his associates.

Mellitus, thus expelled, came into Kent to consult with Laurentius and Justus. The three bishops agreed to leave the country, that they might serve God with freedom elsewhere, rather than remain among enemies without fruit. Mellitus and Justus waiting the issue, retired first into France. The three princes not long after were slain in battle, but their subjects remained still incorrigible.

Laurentius intending to follow the two bishops, employed himself in prayer in the church during the silent hours of the night, with much agony and many tears, entreating God to look upon the state of the English Church, which, after such

promising beginnings, seemed now on the eve of a total dissolution. Next morning he paid a visit to the king, who struck at last with horror for his crimes, and relenting, when he appeared in imminent danger of losing his Christian instructors for ever, forbade his departure, reformed his own life and manners, was baptized, and from that time became a zealous supporter of the faith.*

Eadbald was determined to show the sincerity of his zeal. He recalled Mellitus and Justus from France, after a year's exile. Justus was reinstated in Rochester; but Mellitus could not recover his See. The Londoners preferred idolatry, and Eadbald had not the same power which his father had possessed in that city to oblige them to receive him. So far, however, as his influence extended, he exerted it for the cause of Christ, and from the time of his conversion, adorned the Gospel, and propagated it among his people.

Laurentius being deceased, Mellitus was appointed the third archbishop of Canterbury, while Justus still presided at Rochester. These two bishops governed the English Church with much care and labour.† Mellitus, after having given the most un-
doubted proofs of genuine
piety, and presided over the
diocese of Canterbury five
years, died in the year 624, and was succeeded by Justus.

England was still governed by the Saxon Heptarchy. Seven kingdoms, often at war with one another, and also

* Bede, C. 6.

I was unwilling to introduce into the narrative the story of St. Peter's whipping of Laurentius that night in the church, and reproving of him for his cowardice; whence he was said to have been induced to wait upon Eadbald next morning, who was struck, it seems, with remorse at the sight of the stripes which the bishop had received. Stories of this sort were innumerable in those times. The steady perseverance of Eadbald, and the entire change both of his private and public conduct, demonstrate the reality of his conversion. He most probably retained an inward reverence for the religion in which he had been instructed in his childhood, against which his grand objection seems to have been the love of a dissolute life. The Lord honoured the prayers of Laurentius with success, and recovered the English Church at the last extremity. The substance of the narrative remains entire, abstracted from the legend which disgraces it.

† Bede, C. 7.

with the old native Britons, exhibited in our island scenes of the most unpleasant nature. Nor is any portion of our history in a secular view less interesting. Nevertheless in this dull period it pleased God to show the power of his grace among our ancestors. Hitherto Kent almost alone had been illuminated; but the Gospel was now introduced into the North, where reigned Edwin, king of the Northumbrians. And a woman was once more honoured as the instrument of salvation to a king her husband, and to many of his subjects. Edwin had sent to Eadbald to desire his sister Ethelburg or Tate* in marriage. The Kentish prince, with that Christian sincerity which had ever distinguished him since his conversion, answered, that it was not lawful to marry his sister to an infidel. Edwin replied, that he would certainly grant free liberty of conscience to the princess and to her attendants, adding that he himself would receive the same religion if it appeared more worthy of God. Upon this Eadbald consented, and sent his sister into Northumberland,† attended by Paulinus, who was consecrated

Paulinus made bishop of the North of England,

A. D. 625.

England by Justus in the year 625. The reason for sending him was, that by daily exhortations and administration of the communion he might guard the young princess and her attendants from the infection of idolatry. But Providence had a higher and more extensive aim, and infused into the heart of Paulinus‡ a strong desire to propagate the Gospel in these regions. He laboured much both to preserve Ethelburg and her attendants in Christian simplicity, and to draw over some of the Pagans to the faith. But though he preached a long time, "still, says Bede, the god of this world blinded the minds of unbelievers." After some time Edwin was very near being murdered by an assassin whom the king of the West Saxons sent against him, and the same night his queen was delivered of a daughter.

* Bede, C. 9.

† This term meant in those times all that part of England which lies to the north of the Humber.

‡ He was one of the monks whom Gregory had sent into England, and possessed much of the pious and zealous spirit of that renowned relate.

While the king was thanking his gods for the birth of a daughter, Paulinus began to give thanks to the Lord Christ. Edwin told him, that he himself would worship Christ, and renounce all his gods, if he would give him victory over the king of the West Saxons, who had attempted to murder him, and, for the present, he gave the young infant to Paulinus to be baptized. She was the first Northumbrian who was admitted into the visible Church by the ordinance of baptism; and twelve of the king's family were baptized on that occasion. Edwin collecting his forces vanquished the West Saxons, and killed or reduced into subjection all who had conspired against him. Returning victorious, he determined no longer to serve idols. He was, however, in no hurry to be baptized, but resolved to examine seriously the grounds and reasons of Christianity. He attended Paulinus's instructions, held conferences with prudent and knowing persons, and was himself observed frequently to commune with his own heart, in silence, and anxiously to inquire what was true religion. All who use his methods will not fail to know the truth.

Edwin was doubtless in good earnest, and at length held a consultation with his intimate friends and counsellors. "What is," says he, "this hitherto unheard of doctrine, this new worship?" Conf, the chief of the priests, answered, "See you, O king, what this is, which is lately preached to us? I declare most frankly what I have found to be true, that the religion we have hitherto followed is of no value. If the gods could do any thing, they would more particularly distinguish me with their favours who have served them so diligently. If the new doctrine be really better, let us embrace it." Another of the nobles observed, that he had taken notice of a swallow, which had rapidly flown through the king's house, entering by one door and going out at the other. This happened, he said, when the king was sitting at supper in the hall: a fire burning in the midst, and the room being heated, a tempest of rain or snow raged without; the poor swallow felt indeed a temporary warmth, and then escaped out of the room. "Such," says he, "is the life of man; but what goes before, or comes after, is buried in profound darkness. Our ignorance then, upon such principles as hitherto we have embraced, is confessed; but if this new

doctrine really teach us any thing more certain, it will deserve to be followed.* These and similar reflections were made by the king's counsellors. Coifi expressed also a desire to hear Paulinus preach, which, by the king's order, was complied with. The chief priest, having heard the sermon, exclaimed, "I know formerly, that what we worshipped was nothing; because the more studiously I sought for truth, the less I found it. Now I openly declare, that in this preaching appears the truth, which is able to afford us life, salvation, and eternal bliss. I advise that we instantly destroy the temples and altars, which we have served in vain." The king feeling the conviction with no less strength, openly confessed the faith of Christ, and asked Coifi, who should be the first man that should profane the idolatrous places. "I ought to do it," replied the priest, "I, who worshipped them in folly, will give an example to others in destroying them, by the wisdom given me from the true God." He immediately went to the temple and profaned it, entering in the knowledge of the Most High, and ordered his companions to burn the building with its enclosures. The place was still shown in our author's time, not far from York to the east of the Derwent.

In the eleventh year of Edwin's reign, this prince, with all his nobles and very many of the commonalty, was baptized, one hundred and eighty years

after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, and in the year of Christ 627. This was performed at York in a wooden oratory, in which Edwin had

been first prepared as a catechumen for baptism. By the advice of Paulinus he afterwards began to build on the same spot a church of stone, which however he did not live to finish, but it was completed by Oswald, his successor. Paulinus, first bishop of York, continued for six years, till the death of Edwin, to preach the Gospel; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.† Edwin's children were afterwards baptized; and so strong was the desire of his subjects for Christianity, that Paulinus coming with the king and queen to a royal

villa, called Adregin, spent there thirty-six days in teaching and baptizing from morning till night. At another time he baptized, in the river Swale,* which flows near Catterick, a number of persons who resorted thither. Many of these conversions may be supposed to have been the result of mere complaisance to the court. But there is every reason to believe, that there was a real effusion of the Spirit at this time. And, in the present age, when men profess much to think for themselves, it will not be easy to find a person in high life attending with a more cool and reasonable a spirit to the nature and evidences of true religion, than Edwin and his nobles did at a time which we call extremely barbarous. They thought impartially, and they had the indispensable qualification of being serious in their researches.

Edwin induced also Carpwald, king of the East Angles, to embrace the Gospel. Redwald, the father of this prince, had been baptized in Kent, but had been seduced by his wife into idolatry. Carpwald was succeeded by his brother Sibert, a man of singular zeal and piety, whose labours for the spiritual benefit of his subjects were much assisted by Felix, a Burgundian Christian. This person had received a commission from Honorius, the successor of Justus at Canterbury, to preach among the East Angles, which he did with great success, and lived and died bishop of Dunmuck.‡

The zealous Paulinus preached also in Lincolnshire, the first province south of the Humber,§ where the governor of Lincoln with his house was converted to God. Bede informs us that a friend of his heard an old person make this declaration, "I was baptized, together with a multitude of others, in the river Chanta by Paulinus, in the presence of Edwin." Wonderful things are told us of the perfect peace, order, and justice which prevailed during the reign of the wise and pious king of Northumberland.

Attempts were made all this time by the bishops of Rome, to induce the Irish to unite themselves to the English Church, but in vain. John the bishop of Rome wrote letters also into Ireland against

* Bede, C. 13.

† They are Bede's words; the scriptural reader knows whence he borrowed them, *Id.* C. 14.

* Swale, quæ vicum juxta Cataractam præterfluit.

‡ Now Dunwich in Suffolk.

§ Bede, C. 16.

¶ Now Trent.

¶ Lindescolina.

the Pelagian heresy, which was reviving there.

Edwin, after having six years served the cause of Christ, was slain in a battle, which he fought with Carduella, a British prince, a Christian by profession, and with Penda, king of the Saxon principality of Mercia, a professed Pagan. It is remarkable that the British prince used his victory with savage barbarity, and our author complains that, to his times, the British Christians looked on the English only as Pagans. Paulinus, after this mournful event, retired with Edwin's queen into Kent, whence he had brought her. There being a vacancy at Rochester, he was by Eadbald, who still reigned in Kent, fixed in that See, which he held to his death. His deacon James, whom he had left in Northumberland, preserved still some remains of Christianity in a province now overrun by Pagans. Such are the vicissitudes of the Church in this world: her perfect rest is above.

The situation of the North was, after this, deplorable. Cedwalla, a British king, tyrannized with the fiercest barbarity over the subjects of Edwin, till at length Oswald, his nephew, vanquished and slew him, and established himself in the kingdom. He had, in his younger days, lived an exile in Ireland, and had there been baptized. Desirous of evangelizing his people, he sent for a pastor out of Ireland, who, after he had made some fruitless attempts, returned into his own country, complaining of the intractable disposition of the Northumbrians. "It seems to me," said Aidan, a monk who was present at his complaints, "that your austere manners and conduct towards them, were unsuitable to their state of extreme ignorance. They should be treated like infants with milk, till they become capable of stronger meat." The consequence was, what probably Aidan little expected; he was himself deputed by an Irish council to enter on the mission.

The character of this missionary* would have done honour to the purest times. We may more confidently depend on the account given of him, because he belonged not to the Roman communion, to which Bede was superstitiously devoted, but was a schismatic in the observation

Character
of Aidan
the mis-
sionary.

* Bede, B. III. C. 3, 4, 5.

of Easter, as all the Christians in the British Isles were, except the Saxons. To him Bede applies the expression, that "he had a zeal for God, though not FULLY" according to knowledge.[†] Oswald, whom early education had rather prejudiced in favour of the same schism, gave him an episcopal See in the isle of Lindisfarne.† But there was a great difficulty which attended his ministry; Aidan spake English very imperfectly. Oswald himself, therefore, who thoroughly understood Irish, acted as his interpreter. The zeal of this monarch was indeed extraordinary, to induce him to take such pains. Encouraged by his protection, more Irish ministers came into the North of England, and churches were erected; the Gospel was preached, and Northumberland, by the zeal and piety of the new missionaries, recovered the ground which it had lost by the expulsion of Paulinus. Even to the year 716† the principles of evangelical piety flourished in the Irish school; at which time this people were reduced to the Roman communion.

Adrian himself was a shining example of godliness. He laboured to convert infidels, and to strengthen the faithful. He gave to the poor whatever presents he received from the great, and employed himself with his associates in the Scriptures continually. He strictly avoided everything luxurious, and every appearance of secular avarice and ambition:

* Non plene. Warner, by omitting the expression FULLY, misrepresents our venerable historian, as if he had looked on Aidan as wrong in point of knowledge altogether. In another place he invidiously compares the laboriousness and simplicity of the Irish missionary with the pomp of the Roman pastors sent by Gregory. We have seen abundant proof of the integrity and diligence of the latter. The truth is, that though God is no respecter of persons, man is very apt to be so. Wherever he sends pastors fitted and commissioned by himself, genuine traces of their work appear, and leave salutary fruits behind them. The Irish Saint Columban, and after him Aidan, as well as the Roman missionaries of the Gregorian school, influenced by the same Holy Spirit, left wholesome vestiges of their labours in the British Isles, which extended even to distant ages. Had the former been Protestants, properly speaking, and the latter Papists, the same estimate ought to have been formed, though such a distinction in regard to those ages is chimerical.

† Now called Holy Island, four miles from Berwick.

‡ Bede, C. 4.

he redeemed captives with the money which was given him by the rich: he instructed them afterwards; and fitted them for the ministry.

The king was not inferior to the prelate in his endeavours to promote godliness. Lowly and humble in the midst of prosperity, he showed himself the benefactor of the poor and the needy, and cheerfully encouraged every attempt to spread the knowledge and practice of godliness among men.

In the mean time Byrinus was sent from Rome into Britain, who, arriving among the West Saxons, and finding them all pagans, laboured to instruct them. Cyngilsus, their king, the father-in-law of Oswald, received baptism from him. The two princes gave to Byrinus the city of Dorchester,* where he resided as bishop, and the Gospel was propagated with success through this branch of the heptarchy.

The king of Kent, died, A. D. 640. His son Eadbert destroyed all the idols in his dominions.

In Kent Eadbald died in the year 640,* and was succeeded by his son Eadbert, who reigned twenty-four years, was zealous in the support of godliness, and was the first Saxon king who totally destroyed all the idols in his dominions.

Oswald at length, in the thirty-eighth year of his age, was slain in battle by the same Penda, king of Mercia, who was mentioned before. A memorable instance of the unsearchable ways of Providence! Two kings, whose equals in piety and virtue are not easily found in any age, both lost their lives in battle with the same enemy, a barbarian and a pagan! But they served God not for worldly, but heavenly blessings.

Providence was however preparing the way for the propagation of the Gospel through the whole heptarchy. Young Penda, son of the tyrant of Mercia, desiring in marriage the daughter of Oswy, brother and successor to Oswald, his reception of Christianity was made the condition; and the young prince, we are told, on hearing the doctrines of the Gospel preached, was induced to declare, that he would become a Christian, even if Oswy's daughter were denied him. Two years before the death of old Penda,

the son married the Northumbrian princess, and patronized Christianity in that part of his father's dominions which was committed to his government. But the latter renewed hostilities against Oswy, and at length was slain in battle.* Oswy, now master of Mercia and Northumberland, applied himself to propagate Christianity among his new subjects. Through his influence also the Gospel was restored to the kingdom of the East Saxons; and London, which had rejected the ministry of Mellitus, again embraced the religion of Christ.

In this century, Kentigern, bishop of Glasgow in Scotland, being expelled from his See, founded a monastery, and a bishopric on the banks of the river Elwy in North Wales. Archbishop Usher, quoting John of Tinnmouth, says, there was in the abbey 965 monks, one of whom was named Asaph. Kentigern, being called back to Glasgow, appointed Asaph abbot and bishop of Llan-Elwy. Of Asaph it is recorded that he was a zealous preacher, and that he used to say, "they envy the salvation of souls who withstand the preaching of the Word." The See has since borne his name; and he seems to have had a spirit superior to the monastic superstition, in which he was educated.† Marianus Scotus, in his Chronicle, says, in regard to this century, "Ireland was filled with Saints. Their schools were renowned for ages."‡

But it is time to bring the English Church history of this century to a close. That there was a real effusion of the Holy Spirit on England, so that numbers were turned from idols to the living God; the pastors, first of the Roman, and afterwards of the British communion, laboured in the work with simplicity and success, has been evidenced. We have had also several instances of the completion of that prophecy, "Kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and Queens thy nursing mothers."§ But the zeal and purity of the Christian spirit seldom last much longer than thirty or forty years in any place. The native depravity of man gradually quenches the Spirit of God, and the power of godliness is soon buried, or at least very faintly subsists in the midst of

* The battle was fought between Oswy and Penda, near Leyden, now Leeds, in Yorkshire, at Winwidfield, on the river Winward, now Aire.

† Alban Butler, Vol. V.

‡ Idem.

§ Isaiah, xlix. 23.

* Now Dorchester, near Oxford.

† Bede, C. 3.

factious contentions and worldly lusts. This I find to have been the case in the latter part of the century in England. Wulfrid, bishop of York, a very suspicious character, in his exile laboured indeed among the Frisians, and is said to have been the first missionary who taught that people. If he did any real good among them, it was the most useful part of his life; for in Britain he seems to have fomented turbulence and contention. However, he paved the way for more upright missionaries, whose labours in Friesland shall be mentioned hereafter. The craft of Satan too commonly succeeds in fomenting divisions, even among those who with equal sincerity are engaged in the best of causes. While such men as Paulinus and Aidan lived, the diversity of sentiments produced no great mischief. Afterwards, as depravity increased, and the spirit of faith and love grew colder, very hurtful disputes arose, to the scandal of the Gospel. The Roman Church, however, acquired more and more influence, though it was very far from pervading the whole of the British isles at the end of the century. But nothing particularly pertinent to the design of this history occurs. Let it suffice us to say, that our ancestors saw in this century a blessed time, the fruits of which will abide forever.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN GERMANY AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD.

THE northern part of Europe had still remained in the darkness of idolatry. In this century they were visited by the Most High. The Britons, Scots, and Irish, were honoured as the principal instruments in the work: and this circumstance affords an additional evidence to the account already given of the genuine spirit of godliness which prevailed in the British isles. The French had also their share in the blessed cause. I shall throw together the very imperfect hints which are preserved to us of these important transactions. Though the first instance more properly relates to France than to Germany, it may with no great impropriety be mentioned in this chapter. Omer, bishop of Tervanne, the old metropolis of the Morini in Artois, laboured

with success in the cultivation of a wilderness. Vice and idolatry were very predominant in his diocese; but by the assistance of Bertin, a Swiss, his kinsman, he was enabled to eradicate inveterate evils, and to civilize a race of barbarians.

The erection of many convents in Germany for the Scotch and Irish, some of which are still extant, is to be accounted for from the ecclesiastical connexions of their ancestors. Many persons travelled from Great Britain and Ireland with the laudable purpose of preaching Christ in Batavia, Belgium and Germany.* And however superstition might tarnish their labours, there must have been a nobler principle to induce men to undergo so much danger, with hardly any possible prospect of lucre or fame. Mere philosophers are generally but too liberal in censure and railery: we seldom, however, hear of them engaging in any work of so disinterested a nature. Only the love of God in Christ can support the spirit of men in such enterprizes.

Columbian, an Irish monk, distinguished from him of the same name, spoken of before, who was called "the Ancient," toward the close of the foregoing century had extirpated the remains of expiring paganism in France. He also passed the Rhine, and evangelized the Suevi,† the Boii,‡ and other German nations. He laboured in the cause to his death, which happened in the year 615. Gal, one of his companions, laboured with much zeal about the lakes of Zurich and Constance. Near the latter lake, at a little distance from Bregent, he erected a monastery, which still bears his name. In fortitude and laboriousness he was inferior to none of the missionaries of this age. But we find very little worthy of being recorded concerning him.

The account of Kilian, another Irish missionary, is somewhat more satisfactory. He received a commission from the bishop of Rome, toward the end of the century, to preach to the infidels: and with some of his disciples he came to Wirtzburg upon the Mayne, where a pagan duke called Gosbert was governor. The duke received the Gospel, was bap-

* Mosheim, Cent. 7th. C. 1.

† This people inhabited the places between the Rhine and the Elbe.

‡ Now Bavarians.

tized, and many followed his example. But he had married his brother's wife. The missionary united discretion with zeal, and deflected his admonitions on this head, till he found that his pupil the duke was firmly settled in the faith.* Kilian at length ventured to act the part of John the Baptist, and the event was in a great measure similar. Gosbert promised to obey, but delayed the execution of his promise till he should return from an expedition. The mischief of procrastination against the light of conscience was never more strongly illustrated. In his absence *Geisana*, for that was the name of the

Murder of
Kilian and
his compa-
nions,
A. D. 688.

German Herodias, procured the murder of Kilian and his companions. They were engaged in devotional exercises, and died with the patience of martyrs in the year 688. Fos-

bert was prevailed on by the artifices of *Geisana* to suffer the murderers to escape with impunity. But all the actors in this tragedy, Gosbert among the rest, came to an unhappy end; and there is no doubt but that in this case, as well as many others, the blood of the martyrs became the seed of the Church. Numbers of the eastern Franks had embraced Christianity, and sealed the ministry of Kilian. *Barbatus*, born in the territory of *Benevento*, in Italy, in the beginning of this century, was also a great ornament to it. Meditation on the Scriptures was his chief delight. He was acknowledged to excel in preaching. He acted as curate of *Marciana* near *Benevento*, and gave great influence by his faithfulness. By the number of the people he was obliged to retire to *Benevento*. This town was possessed by the Lombards, who were chiefly *Arians*; many of them were indeed idolaters, though some were of the general Church, with their duke *Arichis*, a friend of *Gregory I.* *Barbatus* labouring there found the Christians, so called, very idolatrous. They worshipped a golden viper, and a tree on which the skin of a wild beast was hung. He preached and prayed a long time; at length the emperor *Constant* besieging *Benevento*, the wicked inhabitants were intimidated so far, as to repent of their idolatry. *Barbatus* was allowed to cut down the tree, and to melt the golden viper, of which he made a sacramental chalice. This man

was appointed bishop of *Benevento* in 663, and destroyed every vestige of idolatry in the whole state. He lived afterwards to bear a testimony by his presence in the council of *Constantinople*, against the *Monothelite* heresy, and died in 692. See *Butler's Lives*.

Barbatus
made
bishop of
Benevento,
A. D. 663.

Died,
A. D. 692.

Toward the conclusion of the century, *Willibrod*, an English missionary, and eleven of his countrymen, crossed over the sea into *Holland*, to labour among the *Friezelanders*. But being ill-treated by the king of *Friesland*, who put one of their company to death,† they retired into *Denmark*. Returning, however, into *Friesland* in the year 693, they propagated divine truth with success. *Willibrod* was ordained bishop of *Witteburg*‡ by the Roman prelate, and laboured in his diocese to his death; while his associates spread the Gospel through *Westphalia* and the neighbouring countries.‡

English
mission-
aries ill-
treated in
Holland,
retired
into *Den-*
mark,

A. D. 693.

It was in this century, the former part of it, according to the researches of one author,§ the latter part, according to those of another,|| that *Bavaria* received the Gospel from the ministry of *Rupert*, or *Robert*, bishop of *Worms*. He was invited by *Theodo*, duke of *Bavaria*. His ministry prospered, and he was appointed bishop of *Salzburg*. The increasing harvest required more missionaries: he therefore returned to his own country, and brought twelve assistants: from that time Christianity was established in *Bavaria*. *Corbinian*, another Frenchman, watered where *Rupert* had planted. Duke *Theodo* received him gladly. His son and successor *Grimoald* was induced to part with his wife, whom he had married contrary to the Levitical laws of matrimonial consanguinity; and so far as can be judged from very imperfect accounts,

* *Mosheim*, Cent. VII. C. 1.

† *New Utrecht*.

‡ *Disc*, an Irish monk, taught the Gospel in Ireland, France, and Germany. His labours were most remarkably crowned with success in the neighbourhood of *Mentz*.—*Alb. Butler*.

§ *Velserius Rerum Boicarum*, B. IV.

|| *Fleury*, B. XII. 31. If *Fleury's* chronology be right, the greatest part of the narrative before us belongs to the next century.

the Gospel was received with great sincerity in this country.*

Some time after,† Emmeram, an Aquitanian Frenchman, leaving his country and his large possessions, travelled to Ratisbon, to spread the Gospel. He was well received by another Theodo, duke of Bavaria. He observed, that the Bavarians were, many of them at least, still addicted to idolatrous rites, which they mixed with Christianity. The old inhabitants were particularly guilty of these things. He laboured among them three years, preaching in all the towns and villages, and reserved for himself only the bare necessities of life. His success was great, and his end was worthy of his profession. Lambert, a son of the duke, murdered him at length with savage barbarity. He had been offered a large revenue and a settlement at Ratisbon by Theodo, which he had refused, declaring that he only wished to preach Christ crucified.

Marinus and Anian, two Egyptians, came into Bavaria, and were very successful in the same cause. But the excessive austerity which they brought with them from the East must have been detrimental to their work. The former at length was murdered by robbers; the latter died a natural death. Elio, bishop of Noyon, carefully visited his large diocese, especially the pagan parts of it, and was very successful among the Flemings, the Antwerpens, and the Frisians. At first he found them fierce and exceedingly obstinate. But God was with him both in life and doctrine. Every Easter he baptized great numbers, who had been brought to the knowledge of God in the preceding year. Very aged persons, amidst crowds of children, came to be baptized, and there is the fairest evidence of his evangelical success.

This is all that I can find, with cer-

* This missionary was remarkable for private devotion, as well as public labours. He reserved to himself a considerable portion of time every day for prayer and meditation. But from Alban Butler's account I learn, that Grimoald persecuted Corbinian on account of his faithfulness; and that Biltrude, the relict of Grimoald's brother, hired assassins to murder him. Both Grimoald and Biltrude perished miserably. If the former was induced to repentance at all, he seems to have relapsed. After the death of his persecutors, Corbinian returned to Frisingen, and laboured till his death, which happened in the year 730.

† Velsar. Id.

tainty, of the propagation of the Gospel in the seventh century in Germany and the neighbouring countries. The censures of Mosheim, as if the greatest part of the missionaries were not sincere, or as if many of the monks covered their ambition with the cloak of mortification, appear to me illiberal and unfounded,* and would have been more worthy of a modern sceptic. Superstition and an excessive attachment to the Roman See is very visible among them. But the little account of facts, which we have, bears testimony to their uprightness. Where is that charity which hopeth all things, if we are to suppose men to be wrong, against all appearances? If ecclesiastical historians had delighted as much in recording good as they have in recording evil, it is probable a more ample refutation of the inconsiderate aspersions of this author might have been exhibited to the reader.

CHAPTER III.

THE GENERAL HISTORY OF THE CHURCH IN THIS CENTURY.

PHOCAS, the Greek emperor, was deposed and put to death by Heraclius in the year 610. He was one of the most vicious and profligate tyrants, and may be compared with Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. Since the days of Constantine such characters had been exceedingly rare. For such was the benign influence of the Gospel, that even amidst all the corruptions and abuses of it, which were now so numerous, a decency of character and conduct, unknown to their Pagan predecessors, was supported by the emperors in general. Heraclius, the successor of Phocas, reigned thirty years. In the beginning of his reign the Persians desolated the eastern part of the empire, and made themselves masters of Jerusalem. While Asia groaned under their cruelties and oppressions, and was afflicted with scourge after scourge, for her long abuse of the best gift of God, an opportunity was given for the exercise of Christian graces to a bishop of a

Phocas put to death by Heraclius, A. D. 610.

* Mosheim, Id. I find no just reason to suspect any of them, except Wilfrid, bishop of York, mentioned in the last Chapter.

Church, which had long ceased to produce Christian fruit.

This was John, bishop of Alexandria, called the Almoner, on account of his extensive liberality. He daily supplied with necessities those who flocked into

Egypt, after they had escaped the Persian arms. He sent to Jerusalem the most ample relief for such as remained there: he ransomed captives; placed the sick and wounded in hospitals, and visited them, in person, two or three times a week. He even seems to have interpreted too strictly the sacred rule, "of giving to him that asketh of thee." His spirit however was noble; "Should the whole world come to Alexandria," said he, "they could not exhaust the treasures of God."

The Nile not having risen to its usual height, there was a barren season; provisions were scarce, and crowds of refugees still poured into Alexandria. John continued, however, his liberal donations, till he had neither money, nor credit. The prayer of faith was his resource, and he still persevered in hope. He even refused a very tempting offer of a person, who would have bribed him with a large present, that he might be ordained deacon. "As to my brethren the poor," said the holy prelate, "God, who fed them, before you and I were born, will take care to feed them now, if we obey him." Soon afterward he heard of the arrival of two large ships, which he had sent into Sicily for corn. "I thank thee, O Lord," cried the bishop in a rapture of joy, "that thou hast kept me from seeking thy gift for money."

From the beginning of his bishopric he supported 7,500 poor persons by daily alms. He was accessible to them on all occasions; and what is most material, divine faith seems to have influenced his acts of love. "If God," said he, "allow us to enter his house at all times, and if we wish him specially to hear us, how ought we to conduct ourselves toward our brethren!" He constantly studied the Scriptures, and, in his conversation, was instructive and exemplary. Slander and evil speaking he peculiarly disliked. If any person in his presence was guilty in this respect, he would give another

turn to the discourse. If the person still persisted, he would direct his servant not to admit him any more.

The long course of heresy, licentiousness, and ambition, which had filled the Alexandrian Church, supported by the shameful examples of such pastors as Theophilus and other profligate men, must have reduced it to the lowest ebb; and I wonder not to find, that persons behaved indecently, even in public worship. John, one day seeing several leave the church after the reading of the Gospel, went out also, and sat down among them. "Children," said he, "the shepherd should be with his flock; I could pray at home, but I cannot preach at home." By doing this twice, he reformed the abuse. Let it be marked, as an evidence of the zeal of this prelate, who, like another Josiah, seems to have been sent to reform a falling church, that the preaching of the word engaged much of his heart. The contempt of preaching is a certain token of extreme degeneracy.

A canon was made at Paris, in a council, in the year 614, the same year in which Jerusalem was taken, which enjoins that he shall be ordained to succeed a deceased bishop, who shall be chosen by the archbishop, together with the bishops of the province, the clergy and the people, without any prospect of gain: if the ordination be conducted otherwise through compulsion or neglect, the election shall be void. The intelligent reader will hence judge of the state of ecclesiastical polity at that time.

In 616 John the Almoner departed from Alexandria, for fear of the Persians, and died soon after in Cyprus, in the same spirit in which he had lived; and with him ends all that is worth recording of the church of Alexandria.

In the same year the haughty Chosroes, king of Persia, having conquered Alexandria and Egypt, and taken Chalcedon, Heraclius, who saw the ruin of his empire approaching, begged for peace. "That I will never consent to," replied the tyrant, "till you renounce him who was crucified, whom you call God, and with me adore the sun." If one compare Chosroes and Heraclius,

Remarkable Canon made in a Council at Paris,

A. D. 614.

In the same year the Persians take Jerusalem.

Death of John about A. D. 616.

their personal characters will not appear intrinsically different. In one is seen a daring blasphemer of Christ, in the other a mere nominal professor of Christianity, whose life brought neither honour nor credit to the Gospel. Their ostensible characters in the world were, however, extremely different. The Lord, who is a jealous God, has ever been used to confound his open enemies in the view of all mankind. Chosroes was a second Sennacherib, and he was treated as such by the Sovereign of the universe. The spirit of Heraclius was roused, and God gave him wonderful success: the Persian king was repeatedly vanquished, though he ceased not to persecute the Christians, so long as he had power; and after he had lost the greatest part of his dominions, he was murdered by his own son, as was the case with Sennacherib, and in the year 628 the Persian power ceased to be formidable to the Roman empire.*

It is not without reason that St. Paul exhorts us "to shun profane and vain babblings; because their word will eat like a canker."† The Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, opposite extremes, the one dividing the person, the other confounding the two natures of Jesus Christ, though condemned by councils, still flourished in great vigour in the east. And the resistance of the orthodox had little effect, for want of that energy of true spiritual life, which still subsisted in a measure in the west. For there the sound doctrine of grace, the guard of true humility, was an ensign, around which truly pious men were wont to rally their strength from time to time. But, in Asia and Egypt, religion was for the

The Monothelite heresy,

A. D. 630.

most part heartless speculation. And about the year 630 the Eutychian heresy produced another, the Monothelite, which ascribed only one will to Jesus Christ. This opinion was the natural consequence of that, which gave him only one nature. Theodore, bishop of Pharan in Arabia, first started this notion, which was also readily received by Sergius, bishop of Constantinople, whose parents had been Eutychians. Cyrus, who soon after was made bishop of Alexandria, supported

the same heresy. The ambiguous subtleties of the party drew the emperor Heraclius into the same net, and the east was rapidly overspread with the heresy.

In a council at Alexandria, Sophronius, a man of sincerity and simplicity, and formerly the disciple of John the Almoner, with tears bewailed and protested against the innovation, but in vain. Having been elected bishop of Jerusalem in 629, he afterwards in 633 exerted his authority against the growing heresy, but with meekness of wisdom. In a synodical letter he explained with equal solidity and accuracy the divine and human operations of Jesus Christ, and gave pertinent instances of both.*

"When he thought fit, he gave his human nature an opportunity to act or to suffer whatever belonged to it. His incarnation was no fancy, and he always acted voluntarily. Jesus Christ, as God, willingly took on himself human nature, and he willingly suffered in his flesh to save us, and, by his merits, to free us from suffering. His body was subject to our natural and innocent passions: he permitted it to suffer, according to its nature, till his resurrection; then he freed himself from all that is corruptible in our nature, that he might deliver us from the same." Sophronius recommends himself to the prayers of Sergius, to whom he writes, and adds, "pray for our emperors," he means Heraclius and his son, "that God may give them victory over all the barbarians; particularly, that he would humble the pride of the Saracens, who for our sins have suddenly risen upon us, and lay all waste with fierce barbarity and impious confidence."

Thus, in the lowest times of evangelical religion, God ever raised up men who understood the truth, and knew how to defend it by sound argument, a charitable spirit, and a holy life. This seems to have been the case of Sophronius. In the mean time the Monothelite heresy spread wider and wider. Even Honorius, bishop of Rome, was led into the snare, owned but one will in Jesus Christ, and imposed silence on all the controversialists. Heraclius himself, who lent his imperial authority to the support of a speculative phantom, while he imposed on

Sophronius opposes the heresy,

A. D. 633.

* Fleury, B. xxxvii. 34.

† 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17.

‡ Fleury, B. xlvii. 41.

* Fleury, B. xxxviii. 5.

his own heart by a specious show of theological nicety, lived in the gross and open wickedness of incest, by marrying his own niece.

The danger from the Saracens, mentioned by Sophronius, was no other than the victorious arms of Mahomet, the Arabian impostor. He had begun A. D. 608,

in the year 608 to declare himself a prophet, and, by the assistance of a Jew and a renegade Christian, had formed a farrago of doctrines and rites, in which there was a mixture of Paganism, Judaism, and Christianity, whence he found means to draw over to his party some of the various sorts of men who inhabited Arabia. An age of excessive ignorance favoured his schemes: at this day so senseless and absurd a book as the Koran could scarcely move the mind of any person in Europe. But he laid hold of the corrupt passions of man, and by indulging his followers in sensuality, ambition, and the love of booty, and by promising them a carnal heaven hereafter, he contrived a religion more directly adapted to please mankind than any other of which we have heard. At the same time by declaring war against all who did not receive him, he gave an undoubted right to all nations to attack a system which could only thrive by the oppression of others. But there are seasons of infatuation, when, for the sins of men, empires and kingdoms are permitted to slumber, and no effectual measures of resistance are embraced, till invaders, at first weak and contemptible, grow in time to an enormous height. This was the case with Mahometanism. The time was come when the Saracen locusts were about to tatter the Christian world, and the prophecy of Rev. ix. (1—12) was going to be fulfilled. The Greeks were idly employed in the new dispute: vice and wickedness prevailed over the East in all forms. A few indeed mourned over the times, and adorned the truth by humility and holiness, but scarcely any Christian writers appeared to make a serious opposition to the doctrines of Mahomet, and at

the time of his death, which happened in the year 631, he had conquered almost all Arabia.*

Notwithstanding the impostor, the Mahometan arms proceeded still with the same rapidity. Damascus fell into the hands of his successors; and Sophronius exhorted his flock to take warning and repent. Jerusalem however was taken by the enemy in the year 637, and Sophronius died soon after. Antioch and Alexandria successively sunk under them. Persia itself was subdued. Thus did God equally punish

Jerusalem taken by the Saracens, A. D. 637.

the persecuting idolaters, and the vicious professors of Christianity in the east. They were doomed to a long night of servitude under Mahometanism, which continues to this time. Heraclius himself died in the year 641. God

Death of Heraclius, A. D. 641.

had showed him great mercies, and given him very great encouragement to seek true religion, by the remarkable success of his arms against the Persians in the middle of his reign. But he lived wickedly and speculated unscripturally. And a new power was erected, which reaped the fruits of all his Persian triumphs, and tore from him the fairest provinces of the east.

To what purpose should I run through the mazes of the Monothelite controversy? yet something must be said on the part which Maximus acted in it. He was one of the most learned men of the age, and had been employed by Heraclius as his secretary; but I wonder not that a man, who loved real godliness, as he did, should have a strong aversion to a court

deceitful as he doubtless was altogether, did not openly oppose God or his Christ. He did not deny directly, though he did consequentially, the divine revelation either of the Old or new Testament. He always spoke respectfully of the inspired prophetic character of Moses and of Christ. He received so much of Christianity as agrees with Socinianism. Jehovah was not therefore openly despised by him as he was by Julian, Chrysostom, and Semacheris. On them was fulfilled that Scripture, "he repayeth them that hate him, to destroy them; he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face." Deut. vii. 10. A speedy destruction of such avowed enemies seems to be intended, that the divine character may be vindicated. His covert enemies; who yet treat him with respectful decorum, are often permitted long to exist, for the punishment of false professors. For the truth and mercy of God are not in any sensibly dishonoured by them in the view of the whole world, as to call for their immediate extirpation.

* It has pleased God to permit the existence of this odious and contemptible religion to this day. And it should be carefully observed that Mahomet, wicked and

like that of Heraclius. He entered into the monastery of Chrysopolis near Chalcedon, and was at length elected abbot. He it was, who succeeded Sophronius in the defence of the primitive faith, and with much labour confuted the heresiarchs. Martin, bishop of Rome, was excited by the zeal of Maximus

Council in the Lateran, A. D. 640.

to assemble a council, in the Lateran, of a hundred and five bishops, in 649. Constans was at this time emperor, and, by a decree, had forbidden any side at all to be taken in the controversy. Sergius, Pyrrhus, and Paul, three successive bishops of Constantinople, had supported the heresy. The controversy had now lasted eighteen years. In this way the active minds of men, destitute of the truth, but eagerly embracing the form of godliness, gratified the self-righteous bias of the heart, and all the malevolent passions in long-protracted controversies, while practical religion was lost. Nor could all the calamities of the times, and the desolation of the eastern churches, move them to the love of peace and truth.

In these circumstances, Martin in council ventured to anathematize the supporters of the Monothelite heresy. I cannot blame his disobedience to the emperor Constans in refusing to observe silence on a point of doctrine which appeared to him important. Constans evidently forgot his office when he required such things. And it is a curious instance of the power of prejudice in some Protestant historians,* that they will so much support the conduct of a worthless tyrant as Constans doubtless was, because his speculative principles induced him to treat a Roman bishop with cruelty. There was a haughtiness, no doubt, and an asperity in the language and behaviour of Martin, very unbecoming a Christian. His cause however seems just; nor does it appear that he either meant or acted treasonably: he defended that part of the truth, which was opposed, with the magnanimity, though not with the meekness, that became a bishop. Constans ordered him to be dragged into the east, and treated him with a long-protracted barbarity of punishment. Martin

Martin, bishop of Rome, cruelly treated by

was firm to the last. "As to this wretched body," says he, "the Lord will take care of it. He is at hand; why

should I give myself any trouble! for I hope in his mercy, that he will not prolong my course." He died in the year 655. His extreme sufferings of imprisonment, hunger, fetters, brutal treatment a thousand ways, call for compassion: his constancy demands respect; and his firm adherence to the doctrines of truth, though mixed with a very blameable ambition in maintaining the dignity of the Roman See, deserves the admiration of Christians. He is, in Romish language, called St. Martin; and I hope he had a just title to the name in the best sense of the word.

Maximus was also brought to Constantinople, and, by the order of Constans, underwent a number of examinations. He was asked by an officer to sign the type;—so the edict of Constance was named. Only do this, said the officer, believe what you please in your heart. "It is not to the heart alone," replied Maximus, "that God hath confined our duty; we are also obliged with the mouth to confess Jesus Christ before men."† It is astonishing† to observe what pains were taken to engage him to own the Monothelite party, nor can this be accounted for in any other way than by the opinion which all men had of his piety and sincerity, and the expectation of the influence which his example would have on many. But the labour was lost: Maximus, though seventy-five years old, preserved all the vigour of understanding, and confounded his examiners by the solidity of his answers. He clearly proved, "that to allow only one will or operation in Jesus Christ, was in reality to allow only one nature: that therefore the opinion for which the emperor was so zealous, was nothing more than Eutychianism dressed up anew: that he had not so properly condemned the emperor, as the doctrine, by whomsoever it was held: that it was contrary to the current of all ecclesiastical antiquity: that our Saviour was always allowed from the apostolical times to be perfect God and perfect man, and must therefore have the nature, will, and operations distinctly belonging both to God and man: that the new notion went to confound the idea both of the Divinity and the humanity, and to leave him no proper existence at

Constans the II.; —died in prison, A. D. 655.

* See Bower and Mosheim.

• See Butler, Vol. XII.

† Fleury, B. XXXIV. 12, &c.

all: that the emperor was not a pastor, and that it had never been practised by Christian emperors, in the best times, to impose silence on bishops: that it was their duty not to disguise the truth by ambiguous expressions, but to defend it by clear and distinct terms adapted to the subject: that Arianism had always endeavoured to support itself by such artifices as those employed by the emperor, and that a peace obtained by such methods in the Church was at the expense of truth." I admire the good sense and sincerity, which appear through the very long account of his defence, of which I have given a very brief summary. Were it not, that God from age to age had raised up such champions in his Church, humanly speaking, not an atom of Christian truth by this time would have been left in the world. For heretics have uniformly acted on this plan; viz. under the pretence of the love of peace and union, they have imposed silence on the orthodox, whenever they had the power; and in the mean time propagated their own tenets. The question before us was very metaphysical and obscure; yet, if the emperor's side had prevailed, instead of an insignificant party, called the *Macronites*, in the east, who still subsist, the *Monothelites* might have filled half the globe to this day.

The tyrant, enraged to find himself disappointed, ordered *Maximus* to be scourged, his tongue to be cut out, his right hand to be cut off; and then directed the mained abbot to be banished, and doomed to imprisonment for the rest of his life. The same punishment was inflicted on two of his disciples, both of the name of *Anastasius*. These three upright men were separated from each other, and confined in three castles in obscure regions of the east. Their con-

demnation took place in 666:

Barbarous
persecu-
tions,
by Con-
stantine II.
A. D. 666.

Maximus died in 662: one of the *Anastasius's* in 664: they both had sustained the most cruel indignities, and had been rendered incapable of any consolation, except those

which undoubtedly belong to men who suffer for righteousness sake. The other *Anastasius* died in a castle at the foot of *Mount Caucasus* in 666.

While such barbarous measures were used by nominal Christians to support unscriptural tenets, it is not to be wondered at that Providence frowned on the

affairs of the empire. The *Saracens* now ruled over Arabia, Persia, Mesopotamia, Chaldea, Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and part of Africa. Even Europe suffered from the depredations of the *Arabians*, and part of Sicily was reduced to their subjection.

The unworthy emperor *Constans* murdered also his own brother *Theodasius*, and continued to disgrace the Christian name by his follies, his vices, and his cruelties. He was himself despatched at length in the twenty-seventh year of his reign, in 668.

Constans
murders
his brother
Theodo-
sius. Is
himself
murdered,
A. D. 668.

In the year 680 a general council was called at *Constantinople*: the emperor *Constantine Pogonatus* presided: the *Monothelite* heresy was anathematized; and its several abettors were condemned, among whom was *Honorius* a bishop of *Rome*. A certain

Council of
Constantinople,
A. D. 680.

proof that infallibility was neither allowed nor pretended to at that time by the Italian prelate. For the legates of *Agathon*, who was then bishop of *Rome*, were at the council, nor do we find that any opposition was made by them or their master to the condemnation of *Honorius*.*

If we compare the East and the West, during this century, we shall see a very striking difference. In England true godliness shone for a considerable part of it: in France there was a good measure of piety; and from these two countries divine truth made its way into Germany and the north with glorious success. In Italy, the Lombards were more and more cleared of Arianism: and though there arose no bishop of *Rome* to be compared at all to *Gregory*, yet, in point of theological speculation, the purity of the faith was preserved by them all, except one.

And his condemnation, which we have just seen, demonstrates that *Antichrist* had not yet arrived at maturity. Infallibility was not then thought of, as attached to the person of the Roman prelate. His power indeed was much too great; so was his pomp and influence. But it was the same with the bishops of other great Sees: and the bishop of *Constantinople* retains the title of *Universal Bishop* to this day. Nor had the bishop of *Rome* any temporal

* This was the VIth general council held in the 13th year of *Constantine V.* surnamed *Pogonatus*, and the 3d year of *Agathon*.

dominion, nor did he pretend to any. In fine, the most decisive marks of Antichrist, idolatry and false doctrine, had not yet appeared at Rome. Superstition and vice were lamentably on the increase in the West, though a considerable degree of true piety prevailed, and some gracious effusions of the Spirit of God appeared.

In the East, the influences of divine grace seem to have been withheld entirely. Men had there filled up the measure of their iniquities. Even from Origen's days a decline of true doctrine, and the spirit of sceptical philosophy, ever hostile to that of grace, kept them low in religion compared with their western brethren. How precious must the grace of the Gospel be, which, being revived in Europe, in the time of Augustine, ceased not to produce salutary effects, and to extend true religion even to the most savage nations! Attempts indeed to propagate, what they call Christianity, were made in the East by the Nestorians, who dwelt in Persia and India, and by the Eutychians, who flourished in Egypt. The former were particularly successful in increasing their numbers; but I have nothing to produce of real godliness as the result of the labours of either party. Abyssinia, which from the days of Athanasius, always considered herself as a daughter of Alexandria, receives thence her pontiff to this day: when Eutychianism prevailed in Egypt, it did so of course in Abyssinia, and has been the prevalent form in both countries, ever since the seventh century. The Mahometan conquerers reduced the ancient professors of orthodoxy into a state of extreme insignificance; and this was one of the scourges of God by the Arabian imposture, namely, that while the orthodox were crushed, heretics were encouraged and protected by those conquerers. Orthodox patriarchs existed indeed in Egypt for some time after the Saracen conquest: but ignorance, superstition, and immorality, still abounded, and have now continued to abound for many centuries. The East, whence the light first arose, has long sat in darkness, with the exception of some individuals from age to age, such as John the Almoner, and a few others who have been mentioned in this chapter. God will have a church upon earth, and it shall be carried to the most despised regions, rather than extinguished entirely. In these works of his providence there is

a significant voice which speaks to Europe in an awful tone.

Africa fell under the powers of the Mahometans toward the close of this century. It had long shared in the general corruption, and it shared in the general punishment. The region, which has so often refreshed us with Evangelical light and energy, where Cyprian suffered, and where Augustine taught, was consigned to Mahometan darkness, and must henceforth be very nearly dismissed from these memoirs.

CHAPTER IV.

AUTHORS OF THIS CENTURY.*

ISIDORE, of Sevil, flourished in the former part of it: he governed the church of Sevil for forty years, having succeeded his brother Leander, of whom we have made honourable mention already. This writer was voluminous, and, with all due allowance for the superstition of the age, appears to have been sincerely pious. But perhaps the most useful part of his works is his collection of sentences out of Gregory. He seems to have been providentially given to Spain, in order to preserve some of the ancient learning, and to prevent men from sinking into total ignorance and rusticity.

Columban must be mentioned also as an author, though we have already celebrated him in the character in which he shone far more, namely, of a missionary. He was, no doubt, pious and fervent: he wrote monastic rules, and while every part of his writings is infected with the servile genius of the times, and the spirit of bondage, which had seized the Church, one sentence retrieves his character, and with it I shall dismiss him; "We must have recourse to Christ the fountain of life." Sophronius of Jerusalem wrote a synodal letter to confute the Monothelites. His part in that controversy has been stated already. He asserted, that we shall rise with the same body, and that the punishments of hell are eternal. The most remarkable thing in him is the soundness of his doctrine, which he adorned with genuine piety and purity of life.

Martin, bishop of Rome, whose suffer-

* Du Pin, Cent. VII.

ings from the tyrant Constans have been succinctly described, was one of the greatest men of the age. Some of his letters are extant, and they indicate both strength of mind, and zeal in religion. Amandus, bishop of Utrecht, in writing to him, declared that he was so grieved to find some clergymen to have lived lasciviously after their ordination, that he was tempted to quit his bishopric. Martin dissuaded him; and at the same time exhorted him to exercise salutary discipline on the offenders, declaring, that such clergymen should be deposed entirely from the sacerdotal function, that they may repent in a private condition, and may find mercy at the last day. He exhorts Amandus to undergo patiently all trials for the salvation of the sheep, and the service of God. This Roman prelate

doubtless was sincere, and he appears to have defended evangelical truth with much firmness. And it was for a branch of scriptural doctrine that he suffered with consistency and integrity.

I mention Maximus, his fellow-sufferer in the same cause. His writings are too scholastical to merit much attention, though he was, doubtless, a very able reasoner, and, what is infinitely better, a pious and upright man.

I might swell the list, with the names of writers little known, and of little use. Learning was very low: the taste of the age was barbarous: we have seen, however, that Christ had then a Church; and the reader, if he pleases, may travel through still darker scenes; yet I trust some glimmerings of the presence of Christ will appear.

CENTURY VIII.

CHAPTER I.

VENERABLE BEDE, THE ENGLISH PRESBYTER.

THE Church-history of our Country, written by this renowned father, was continued to the year 731. I have extracted from it that which suited my purpose. He is said to have died, A. D. 735. Of his age the accounts are very contradictory. The history of the VIIIth century will properly begin with a brief narrative of the life and works of this Historian.

He was born near Durham, in a village now called Farrow, near the mouth of the Tyne. Losing both his parents at the

Born, age of seven years, he was, A. D. 672. by the care of relations, placed in the monastery of Weremouth, was there educated with much strictness, and appears from his youth to have been devoted to the service of God. He was afterwards removed to the neighbouring monastery of Jerrow, where he ended his days. He was looked on as the most learned man of his time. Prayer, writing, and teaching, were his familiar employments during his whole life.* He was ordained deacon in the nineteenth, and presbyter in the thirtieth, year of his age. He gave himself wholly to the study of the Scriptures, the instruction of disciples, the offices of public worship, and the composition of religious and literary works. The life of such a person can admit of little variety. It was not, however, for want of opportunity that he lived thus obscure. His character was celebrated through the Western world: the bishop of Rome invited him warmly to the metropolis of the Church; but in the eyes of Bede, the great world had no charms. It does not appear that he ever left England; and, however infected with the fashionable devotion to the Roman See, he was evidently sincere and disinterested.

Constantly engaged in reading or writing, he made all his studies subservient

to devotion. As he was sensible, that it is by the grace of God, rather than by natural faculties, that the most profitable knowledge of the Scriptures is acquired, he mixed prayer with his studies. He never knew what it was to do nothing. He wrote on all the branches of knowledge then cultivated in Europe. In Greek and Hebrew he had a skill very uncommon in that barbarous age; and, by his instructions and example, he raised up many scholars. Knowledge indeed in those times was more familiar in the British isles than in any part of Europe.

The catalogue of Bede's works exhibits the proofs of his amazing industry. His Church-history is to us the most valuable, because it is the only British monument of the Church which we have for the seventh century. His expositions and homilies, however, must in that dearth of knowledge have been abundantly useful. The ignorance of the times is indeed but too visible in him; and he followed Augustine and other fathers so closely, and collected so much from various authors, that his want of original genius is more than problematical. Genuine godliness, rather than taste and genius, appear on the face of his writings. His labours in the sciences show a love of learning; however inconsiderable his acquisitions must appear, in comparison with the attainments of the present age.

In his last sickness he was afflicted for two weeks with a difficulty of breathing. His mind was, however, serene and cheerful, his affections were heavenly; and amidst these infirmities he daily taught his disciples. A great part of the night was employed in prayer and thanksgiving; and the first employment of the morning was to ruminate on the Scriptures, and to address his God in prayer. "God scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," was frequently in his mouth.

Even amidst his bodily weakness he was employed in writing two little treatises. Perceiving his end to draw near, he said, "If my Maker please, I will go to him from the flesh, who, when I was not, formed me out of nothing—my soul desires to see Christ my king in

Account of the death of Bede.

* Life of Bede, prefixed to his Works. Colleague edition.

his beauty." He sang glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and expired with a sedateness, composure, and devotion, which surprised all who were present at this scene.

This is the account of his death by one of his disciples; and a very few quotations from his expository writings will show on what solid grounds these religious affections were founded. In expounding Acts ii. 28, "Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance;" he says, "These things are not only to be understood of our Lord, who needed no other guide to overcome the kingdom of death, but having received at once the fulness of divine strength and wisdom, was able to conquer death by himself, rise again to life, and ascend to his Father, but also of his elect, who, by his gift, find the way of life, by which they rise to the bliss which they lost in Adam, and shall be filled with heavenly joy. This shall be our perfect bliss, when we shall see him face to face. Philip knew this well, when he said, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.' That pleasure of seeing the face of God sufficeth: there shall be nothing more; nor is there a call for anything more, when he is seen who is above all."^{*}

* Other innumerable methods of saving men being set aside, this was selected by Infinite Wisdom, namely, that without any diminution of his divinity, he assumed also humanity; and in humanity procured so much good to men, that temporal death, though not due from him, was yet paid, to deliver them from eternal death, which was due from them. Such was the efficacy of that blood, that the devil, who slew Christ by a temporary death which was not due, cannot detain in eternal death any of those who are clothed with Christ, though that eternal death be due for their sins."[†]

Such were the Evangelical views, which, in a night of superstition, burst forth from the northern extremity of England. But the doctrines revived by Augustine flourished still in Europe in a

good degree, though in no part more than in the British isles. Indeed monastic superstition grew among our fathers at the same time excessively, and, in the end, entirely corrupted the doctrines. But that was not yet the case: superstition itself, though deplorably childish and absurd, was not incompatible with sincerity and the fear of God. The real nature of the Gospel, and its practical exercise in faith, humility, and true mortification of sin, were understood and felt by the Saxon presbyter, whose comments on St. Paul's epistles are, in depth of understanding and penetration into the sacred sense, even with all the defects of the times, greatly superior to several admired expositions of this, which calls itself an enlightened age.

The seventh chapter to the Romans may deservedly be called a touchstone of spiritual understanding. Too many modern divines, by supposing that the Apostle is only describing the conflict between reason and passion, after the manner of the ancient philosophers, have demonstrated their own total ignorance of St. Paul's argument. He only, who feels, abhors, and sincerely struggles with indwelling sin, who is conscious of its unutterable malignity, and is humbled under this conviction, can understand the Apostle aright, and prize the real grace of God in Jesus Christ. Such was Bede: the very best expositors in the most evangelical times do not much exceed him, in clearness and solidity, in the exposition of this chapter. I will not delay the reader by quoting largely from his explanation. Suffice it to give a hint or two. He observes, from the Apostle, that the desire of shaming itself is increased by the prohibitions of the law, which therefore increases sin, without giving any strength; and the purport of this part of the divine economy is, that men groaning under the law might come to the Mediator. He strongly contends, that the wretched carnal person, sold under sin, in this chapter, was no personated character, but Paul himself, and he confirms this by observing, from the epistle to the Philippians, that the Apostle confessed "he was not perfect, and had not attained unto the resurrection of the dead;" and from another epistle, that he was even buffeted by Satan, and had a thorn in his flesh, lest he should be exalted above measure. This inward warfare, our author contends, must last through

* Retraetat, on Acts of the Apostles. I cannot prevail on myself to omit this passage, though the expression of Philip be not so pertinent to the purpose of the author, as some other portions of Scripture might have been.

† On Rom. v.

life. "In the resurrection, every thing," says he, "shall be perfected. In the mean time it is a great thing to keep the field, and remain unconquered, though not discharged from war."

But though he fully reached the scope of Augustine, from whose labours he profited abundantly, he seems never to go beyond it. Indeed his expositions are extracts and compilations from the fathers, chiefly from Augustine. In this sense they were his own, that he understood and experienced their truth and efficacy. But judgment and industry, not genius and invention, were the talents of this writer. Though the thought I am going to mention is most probably not his own, yet it gives so instructive a view of the state of all mankind, ranked in four classes, that I cannot prevail on myself to withhold it from the reader. Speaking of the conflict with in-dwelling sin, described in Rom. vii. he observes, "that there are those who fight not at all, and are drawn away by their lusts; others who fight indeed, but are overcome, because they fight without faith, and in their own strength; others who fight, and are still in the field, not overcome, which was the case with St. Paul and all true Christians in this world; and lastly, others who have overcome, and are at rest above." Bede, like Augustine, allegorizes to excess, and is very often desultory and vague in his comments: his views of Solomon's Song are solid, though in the explication too minute: still more faulty perhaps are his expositions on the tabernacle and on Solomon's temple. His homilies, at the time, must have been very edifying, notwithstanding the puerile fancies with which they are discoloured. On the whole I shall venture to observe, what, however, no reader will be prepared to receive, unless his mind has been seasoned with a degree of experimental religion, that the comments of Bede are far more solid and judicious than those of many modern, improperly called rational, divines; though in the former the errors of fanciful Allegory may abound, and in the latter there may every where appear an air of strict and accurate argumentation. The reason is, because the former, being possessed of the true meaning of the Apostle on the whole, supports and illustrates it throughout, though he fails in detached passages, because of the desultory ebullitions of a vicious taste,

which predominated in his time; the latter with "semblance of worth, not substance," are accurate and just in many particulars, but from their system of notions, which is extremely opposite to that of St. Paul, mislead their readers altogether, in regard to the main drift of the argument.

A year before our presbyter's death, he wrote a letter to Egbert, archbishop of York, which deserves to be immortalized, for the solid sense which it exhibits, a quality with which Bede was very eminently endowed.*

"Above all things," says he, "avoid useless discourse, and apply yourself to the Holy Scriptures, especially the epistles to Timothy and Titus; to Gregory's pastoral care, and his homilies on the Gospel.—It is indecent for him, who is dedicated to the service of the Church, to give way to actions or discourse unsuitable to his character.—Have always those about you who may assist you in temptation: be not like some bishops, who delight to have those about them who love good cheer, and divert them with trifling and facetious conversation.

"Your diocese is too large to allow you to go through the whole in one year; therefore appoint presbyters, in each village, to instruct and administer the sacraments; and let them be studious, that every one of them may learn, by heart, the Creed and the Lord's prayer; and that if they do not understand Latin, they may repeat them in their own tongue. I have translated them into English, for the benefit of ignorant presbyters. I am told, that there are many villages in our nation, in the mountainous parts, the inhabitants of which have never seen a bishop or a pastor; and yet they are obliged to pay their dues to the bishop.

"The best means to reform our Church, is to increase the number of bishops. Who sees not, how much more reasonable it is for numbers to share this burden? Gregory therefore directed Augustine to appoint twelve bishops to be under the archbishop of York as their metropolitan. I wish you would fill up this number with the assistance of the king of Northumberland.†

* Bede's Works, Paris edit. p. 46.

† His name was Ceddulph. Two years after Bede's death, he gave up his crown, and lived twenty-two years in a monastery. His mind was most probably truly devout, though the

"I know it is not easy to find an empty place for the erection of a bishopric. You may choose some monastery for the purpose. In truth, there are many places which have the name of monasteries without deserving it."—He goes on to show how, for thirty years past, the scandalous abuse of monasteries had prevailed, and how useless many of them were to church and state, as they preserved neither piety nor decency. He directs Egbert to see that his flock be instructed in Christian faith and practice, and that they frequently attend the communion. He finds fault with the excessive multiplication of monks, and expresses his fears, lest, in process of time, the state should be destitute of soldiers to repel an invasion. This last observation is of a piece with another at the close of his history, that many Northumbrians in his days, both nobles and private men, employed themselves and their children more in monastic vows than in the exercise of arms. "What effect this will have," says he, "the next generation will bear witness." It is no common instance of judgment in one who had always been a monk, to notice these evils.* How they happened to be so very fashionable in our island, it is not hard to explain. Our ancestors were, doubtless, much indebted under God to the Roman See. Christianity, before the missions of Gregory, was very low in England. A real spirit of godliness, the sincere practice and true understanding of the Gospel, had been, through the bishops of Rome, introduced among barbarians. Even the benefits thence resulting to society must have been great. Gratitude and affection would naturally lead our ancestors, in those superstitious ages, to imitative excesses. And if the evils of which Bede complains, be strong proofs of the superstitious taste, they are proofs also of the spirit of piety which subsisted among them. Where Bede lived, in no part of the world was godliness better understood and practised than among our ancestors. In a synod held by Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury, about the middle of this century, at Clovesham,†

spirit of the times led him into a degenerate method of showing it.

* Even kings gave themselves up to retirements of this kind; and there what not instance, among the Saxon princes, of pilgrimages to Rome of a religious nature.

† Now Cliff, near Rochester. Warner.

there were twelve prelates, with Ethelbald, king of the Mercians. The canons of this synod would have done honour to the purest times, and they seem to have been inspired by the genius of Bede. The clergy are directed to have fellowship with one another, to serve God in one spirit of faith, hope, and charity, to pray for one another, to attend to the duties of the Sabbath, and, in fine, the same things are repeated, which are to be found in Bede's letter to Egbert.

Let us not pride ourselves in a fancied superiority to our forefathers: a vanity of this sort seems to be the disease of the present age;—but men were not all without understanding in those dark seasons.—The indiscriminating censures of Mosheim on whole centuries, seem to show more contempt and ill-humour than discernment. Bede alone knew more of true religion, both doctrinal and practical, than numbers of ecclesiastics put together at this day; which will clearly appear, if we do but free him from superstitious rubbish, and examine what he is internally.

CHAPTER II.

MISCELLANEOUS PARTICULARS.

A LITTLE after the beginning of this century, Lambert, bishop of Maestricht, was murdered.—He had succeeded Theodard, under whom he had been educated, and for forty years had adorned the Gospel by a life of piety and charity. He had been seven years deprived of his See, amidst the civil confusions of France, but had been re-established about the year 681. This Lambert restored prelate had exerted himself with much zeal in his diocese, and laboured with success in the conversion of the Pagans, who were in his neighbourhood. His patience as well as his doctrine, had a salutary effect. It is not, however, in the power of the wisest and best of men to restrain the tempers of their friends and relations. Two brothers, Gallas and Rhold, were intolerably violent in plundering the Church of Maestricht, and infesting the neighbourhood. Lambert's relations, particularly two nephews, returned evil for evil, and slew them, much against the will of the bishop. Doubtless, the brothers ought

Lambert
restored
A. D. 681.

to have applied to the civil magistrate, though justice was at that time very ill administered in France. Dodo, a powerful baron of the neighbourhood, a relation of the robbers, was determined to revenge their deaths upon the bishop himself; and he attacked him with armed men at Leodium* upon the Meuse. Lambert, in his first agitation upon the news of their approach, seized a sword, but recollecting himself, and lifting up his heart to God in prayer, he laid aside the sword, and composed himself to suffer. Two of his nephews began to make resistance. "If you love me truly," said Lambert, "love Jesus Christ also, and confess your sins to him. As for me, it is time for me to go to live with him." "Do you not hear," said another nephew, "how they call out to set fire to the house, to burn us all alive?" Remember, replied the bishop calmly, the guilt of the murder is yours: submit and receive the due recompense of your deeds. He continued in fervent prayer, and the armed men put to the sword all whom they found, and among the rest, Lambert himself. A man of a Christian spirit surely, and worthy of a more enlightened age, in which his humility, piety, and charity might have shone with a brighter lustre!

Ceolfred, in the early part of this century, governed the two monasteries of Weremouth and Jerrow, which had educated Bede. Through his influence, the Picts, who inhabited North Britain, were brought over to the Roman mode of celebrating Easter, and of course to the Roman communion.* But I can find no account of any progress in piety in the British isles. As the Roman church itself grew more corrupt in this century, our ancestors were infected with a larger portion of its superstitions.

In the year 713, the Mahometans passed over from Africa into Spain, and put A. D. 713. an end to the Kingdom of the

Goths, which had lasted three hundred years. The Christians were there reduced to slavery; and thus were scourged those wicked professors of religion, who had long held the truth in unrighteousness, called on the name of Christ, while in works they denied him, and buried his faith under an enormous heap of superstitions. A remnant, how-

ever, preserved their independency in the Austrian mountains, who chose Pelagius, a person descended from the royal family, for their king. He expressed his hope, that after God had chastised them for their sins, he would not give them up wholly to the Mahometans. His confidence in God was not disappointed. Under circumstances extremely disadvantageous, he defeated the enemy, repopled the cities, rebuilt the churches, and, by the pious assistance of several pastors, supported the Gospel in one district of Spain, while the greatest part of the country was overrun by the Arabians. But the successors of Pelagius, by degrees, recovered more cities from the enemy.

Christendom at this time presented a very grievous and mournful spectacle. Idolatry itself was now spreading widely, both in Europe and in Asia, among the professors of the Gospel:† men had very commonly every where forsaken the faith and the precepts of Jesus, in all those countries which had been long evangelized. The people, who served the Lord in the greatest purity and sincerity, seem to have been our ancestors,‡ and the inhabitants of some other regions, which had but lately received the Gospel. So true is the observation, which our history constantly gives us occasion to make, namely, that there is a perpetual tendency in human nature to degeneracy and corruption. Such, however, was the goodness of God, that he still exercised much long suffering amidst the most provoking enormities; and after he had removed the candlestick from some churches, he carried it to other places,§ so that the light of his Gospel was never removed from the earth. The most marvellous event in such cases is, that men seem not at all conscious of their crimes, nor perceive the avenging hand of God

* This important event will be explained in the next chapter.

† Ireland, which Prideaux calls the prime seat of learning in all Christendom, during the reign of Charlemagne, was peculiarly distinguished in this century. Usher has proved the name of Scotia to have been appropriated to Ireland at this time. Eginhard, the Secretary of Charlemagne, calls Ireland *Hibernia Scotorum insula*. Several of these Scots (Irish) laboured in the vineyard in Charlemagne's time, and were made bishops in Germany. Both sacred and profane learning were taught by them with success.

‡ This will be illustrated in Chap. IV.

* Now Liège. Fleury, XII. 16.

† Egbert, an Englishman, not long after, effected the same change among many of the Irish.

upon them. For the nominal Christians of the day were insensible of their condition; and, though the Arabians were evidently making large strides toward universal dominion, it was not till they had advanced into the heart of France, and ravaged that country in a dreadful manner, that any strong efforts were made to withstand them. In the year

Sarracens
defeated
by C. Martel,

A. D. 732.

732, however, they were totally defeated near Poitiers, by the heroic Charles Martel. An event memorable in history, because by it the providence of God stopped the progress of the Arabian locusts. It is astonishing, that all the civilized nations had not long ago united in a league, which would have been equally just and prudent, to stem the torrent which threatened the desolation of mankind. Those who had, for ages, trusted more in relics, altars, austere fasts, pilgrimages, than in Christ crucified, and had lived in deceit, avarice, and uncleanness, were suffered to yield themselves a prey to devouring invaders.—Admired be that Providence, which, in the crisis, preserved Europe from complete desolation, and, by saving France from these barbarians, has still left a people to serve God in these western regions.*

CHAPTER III.

THE CONTROVERSY ON IMAGES. THE MATURITY OF ANTICHRIST.

ABOUT the year 727, the Greek emperor began open hostility with the bishop of Rome, and to use the words of Sigonius, "Rome and the Roman empire, which had passed from the Greek to the Roman bishop." It would have been more accurate to say, that a foundation was then laid for the temporal power of that prelate, than that it was actually established.

* The plague of the locusts, Rev. ix. contained five months, that is, 150 years, a day being reckoned for a year in prophetic language. It may be difficult to reckon exactly the time of the entrance of the Arabian locusts, because of the obscurity and confusion of the historians. But divine truth was exact, no doubt, and under every possible way of computation, the period of about 150 years will properly limit the duration of the Saracen conquests.

† Sigon. Hist. de Regn. Italie, B. III.

However, as it was established a few years after, and a rupture commenced at the period just mentioned, I shall assume this as the most proper date that I know of, for the beginning of popedom, which from this time is to be regarded as Antichrist indeed; for it set itself by temporal power to support false doctrine, and particularly that, which deserves the name of idolatry.

The marvellous propensity of all ages to the sin of idolatry, which implies a departure of the heart from the one living and true God, must originate in some steady principles existing in the nature of fallen man. The true account of this extraordinary and lamentable fact seems to be as follows:—God is an immaterial, self-existent Being, of infinite power and goodness, and, as our Maker and Preserver, He has an unquestionable claim to our supreme veneration and affection. Man, considered as a rational creature, is endowed with faculties abundantly sufficient for the discovery of this great and perfect Being, so far as his own duties and interests are concerned. This has frequently been proved, by able moralists, in the way of argument, and is expressly affirmed to be the case by St. Paul, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, where it is said, that "that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;—so that they are without excuse."

In fact, however, fallen man has never, by the mere use of his reason, found out God to any good purpose, and worshipped him accordingly; and even when God by special revelation has condescended to explain and manifest his true character to a particular people, few of that people have served him as they ought to have done for any great length of time; but they soon corrupted the divine religion, and were plunged in idolatry.

The Jehovah of the sacred writings, and the Almighty and all-perfect God, who may be discovered by sound reason, is an invisible Being, and is to be honoured, as a Spirit, with the heart, and the understanding, and without the intervention of sensible objects, as stocks or stones. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." But the history of our corrupted

nature shows, that images and other sensible objects have, in all ages, offered themselves to men's minds as guides and helps to a conception of the Deity; and if, in some instances, these absurd inventions of gross idolatry have been rejected by men of learning and refinement, it has then generally happened, that intellectual figments of philosophical vanity have been substituted in their place, figments still more atheistical in their nature, and farther removed from the notion of a wise and authoritative Governor of the Universe, who enjoins the submission and dependence of his creatures, requires their obedience, and dispenses justice impartially.

The principles, which appear to account for this apostasy and opposition to the divine Will, may be comprehended under the terms pride, self-love, self-righteousness, and desire of independence; or, indeed, under the single term pride alone, if we use that expression according to its most extensive application. Fallen man is too proud, practically to feel and confess his relative ignorance and inanity, when compared with the Supreme Author of all things; and the same principle prevents him from placing his supreme regard and esteem on God, though reason dictates, and revelation commands this duty. He loves himself and his own gratifications too well. Then it is easy to understand, that pride and self-righteousness are nearly synonymous expressions: a proud being will never esteem his own "righteousness as filthy rags," (Isaiah lxiv. 6.): will never cordially beg for pardon of his sins: he has too good an opinion of his own labours, inventions, and performances; in a word, he is self-righteous; and, in a similar way, it is plain, that the same being will aim at independence, and be impatient of control. In such a dangerous and corrupt state of human affections, the broad and crowded road to idolatry, which is the object we are seeking, is not difficult to be traced. For, whether we consider pride as a comprehensive principle, evolving itself, according to the explanation just given, in various mischievous operations; or, whether we choose to confine the meaning of the term, no one will doubt, but that in fact, mankind in all ages have been grievously wanting in humility, have proudly set themselves up against God, have been actuated by inordinate self-love, and not submitting to

the righteousness of God, and impatient of control, have endeavoured to establish their own righteousness. The existence of these principles and inclinations implies an absolute departure of the heart from the living God; and when that has once taken place through the action of some steady cause, the progress to idolatry, or to some species of atheism, nearly allied to idolatry, is the next step. Man has departed from the true God, and there must be some device to quiet conscience. Thus, in rude and barbarous times, the proud, self-righteous devotee, will naturally have recourse to the sottish invention of the worship of wood, or stone, or metals, and become a gross idolater. He will burn part of the wood with fire, and of the rest he will make a god, and kneel before it. The discovery mightily pleases him: he has found out a god, exactly suited to his taste; a god, who will easily pardon his vices, set a high value on his imagined virtues, and be constantly propitious to him; a god, who is not a universal Governor or Benefactor, but who is particularly kind to himself and his countrymen; a god, whom he can see and handle, and in whom he may pride himself, as having contrived and finished it with the tongs and hammer, or with the plane and compass; a god, who is local and tutelar, and over which he himself has considerable power: he can place it in his temple, in his chamber, or in the camp.

The ancient idolaters, by their images, often represented deceased chiefs, or heroes, or kings, who were still supposed to possess a superintending influence over the affairs of men; and, not unfrequently, these departed beings appear to have ranked among the most wicked of mankind. In more modern times, even Christianity itself has been disgraced with the adoration of images, representations, and relics of saints; nor has the abominable superstition always sufficiently taken care, that the supposed saints themselves should be reputable characters.

In ages of great learning and refinement, the same principle of pride, which in religious concerns, blinding the understanding and corrupting the affections, effectually draws the heart from the living and true God, induces men to profess a reverence for abstruse and intellectual figments, as nature, a principle of order, or the soul of the universe. These notions of God, which prevail in polished seasons

of the world, in one sense merit the imputation of idolatry, in another of atheism; and, in any possible interpretation, they must be deemed equivocal, unintelligible, and pernicious. The species of idolatry are exceedingly various; but they differ not much either in their source or their tendency. In all circumstances, man is miserable and blind, if he be not seeking and worshipping the true God in spirit and truth. If, in breach of the second commandment, he represent the glory of Jehovah by images, or if, in breach of the first, he set up a divinity opposite to Jehovah, in both cases he forms a deceitful basis for salvation and happiness, and directly affronts the perfections of God. Such practices are, therefore, forbidden throughout the Scripture, in the most positive manner.

The guilt of idolatry, though no sin is so much spoken against throughout the Old Testament, is not so offensive to natural conscience as that of crimes committed against our fellow-creatures.—Many persons are apt to wonder why the Israelites were so prone to it; not considering yet knowing their own idolatry, which works in a way more suited to present times and circumstances. But whoever understands, that idolatry implies the departure of the heart from the living God, and the fixing of it on something else; that to distrust his word, and to put confidence in some sensible object, by which we would represent him to our minds,—still further, that to glory in our own strength and righteousness, instead of seeking salvation by grace through faith only, proceeds from pride, and pours all possible contempt on the Divine Majesty, will not wonder at God's indignation against this sin, will see how naturally it operates on the human mind, and how it effects a complete demonstration of the apostasy of man.

The earliest Church of God were distinguished from the nations all around, by the most express prohibition of this sin. They were directed not to worship any but the living God, nor even Jehovah himself by any images whatever; much less were they allowed to worship any creature by representations, which would be to break the two first commandments by the same act. He, who knows the propensity of his own heart to distrust the providence and grace of God, and how eagerly we catch at any human relief, instead of patiently waiting upon

God in trouble, will not wonder that the Israelites worshipped the calf in the absence of Moses, nor think the sin small, because they intended to honour Jehovah by the symbol.

Under the Gospel dispensation the prohibition of images continued, and, in the purest times, there was little occasion to dwell on the subject. God in Christ was worshipped, in spirit and in truth, by the primitive Christians: and while they called on the Gentiles to turn from their idols to the living God, idolatry itself, in any of its forms, could scarcely find a shadow of admission into the Christian Church.

For, while men's hearts were filled with peace and joy in believing, while the doctrines of justification and regeneration were precious and all-important in their eyes, and they lived by the faith of Jesus, saw his glory, and felt in their souls the transforming power of his grace, the deceitful aids of idolatry had no charms. It was not till the knowledge of the Gospel itself was darkened and adulterated, that the miserable spirits of men had recourse to such vain refuges, and that the mind, no longer under the influence of the Holy Spirit, betook itself to the arts of sculpture and painting, in order to inflame its affections, and to kindle a false fire of devotion. Christians then worshipped the true God with the understanding, and whoever was converted to the faith, ceased from idolatry. And, as we have seen, Christian emperors, particularly Theodosius, destroyed image-worship in their dominions. Origen, in his treatise against *Celsus*, observes, that it is not possible that any, by worshipping images, should attain the knowledge of God. Athanasius and Lactantius* strongly inculcate the same truth. Toward the end of the fourth century, some approach toward this evil appeared in the Church. Epiphanius, bishop of Cyprus, observes,† that he found a linen-cloth hanging on the church-door

* In the three Homilies of the Church of England, against *Pope of Idolatry*, the controversy is handled with much solidity and historical information. I have made some use of them for my purpose. It seems proper that every Protestant Divine should acquaint himself with the fundamentals of the controversy, and be able satisfactorily to convince himself, that popery is not, what it pretends to be, founded on the precedents of Christian antiquity.

† See Vol. II. p. 93.

painted, and having in it the image of Christ, or some saint. "Observing this," says he, "so contrary to the authority of the Scriptures, I tore the cloth." The famous Jerom published, in Latin, an epistle of Epiphanius concerning this subject, and added his own testimony on the point. So evident is it, that at that time images were absolutely prohibited in the Church of Christ.

Augustine also gave his opinion against images. "They are of more force to pervert the soul than to instruct it."

Augustine's judgment respecting the use of images.

And "when images are once placed in temples, and had in honour, error creepeth in."

Men, however, who had been lately turned from idols, began at length to paint or carve images of Christ, the

Virgin Mary, and the Apostles. Jerom observes, that the errors of images passed to the Christians from the Gentiles; and Eusebius the historian, says, that images of Peter and Paul, and of our Saviour himself, were made in his time, which he took "to be a heathenish custom."

They were not, however, worshipped, nor publicly set up in churches. Paulinus, who died bishop of Nola

Death of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, A. D. 431.

in the year 431, caused the walls of a temple to be painted with stories taken from the Old Testament, that the people might thence receive instruction: the written word was neglected, and these poor substitutes were placed in its room. A strong sign of the growing ignorance! As the ignorance increased, these historical paintings and images increased also. Serenus, bishop of Marseilles, because of the danger of idolatry, brake to pieces the images then set up in the churches. I have already noticed the imprudent concession made by Gregory, bishop of Rome, on this occasion, to the growing superstition. Thus, six hundred years after Christ, images had begun to appear in churches, but still without idolatry. The authority of Gregory, however, had evil consequences: the spirit of idolatry grew stronger, as real spiritual knowledge decayed; and men having now, in a great measure, lost the divine way of applying to God through Christ, by faith, for the relief of their consciences, became still more prone to rely on idols. So closely connected is the doctrine of justification with the purity of worship. In

this respect the Roman* church advanced in corruption more rapidly than the Eastern. And Grecian emperors employed themselves in destroying images, and pictures, while in Italy they were held in idolatrous admiration. The evil, in truth, became incurable, because there was no clear and effectual knowledge of the Gospel, that might dissipate the clouds of error. Yet were men's opinions divided both in the east and the west; and, at length, the crisis arose, when the Christian world was formally broken into two parties on this question.

We are now advanced to the year 527, when Leo, the Isaurian, the Greek emperor,† began openly to oppose the worship of images, and produced the rupture with the Roman See, before mentioned.—A Syrian, born of Christian parents, named Beasr, who had been taken by the Mahometans, and afterwards returned to the Romans, had imbibed an opinion of the unlawfulness of the practice, having, very probably, observed the advantage which it had given to the infidels. He was in great favour with the emperor, and convinced him by his arguments, that image worship was idolatrous. But the most eminent defender of the purity of divine worship in this point, and whom Fleury therefore, in his popish zeal, calls the author of the heresy,‡ was Constantine, bishop of Nacolia in Phrygia. Convinced in his judgment, and zealous to propagate what appeared to him to be right, Leo assembled the people, and with the frankness and sincerity, which mark his character, publicly avowed his conviction of the idolatry of the growing practice, and declared that images ought not to be erected for adoration. Such a declaration in the sixth century would have raised no ferment in Christendom; but idolatry had been gradually advancing as the simplicity and purity of Christian faith had decayed. Men of no religious solicitude naturally conformed themselves to the habits of the times: persons who had some concern for the soul had been so long trammelled in a variety of superstitions for the relief of conscience,

The Emperor opposes the worship of Images, A. D. 527.

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* I say the Roman; for in other parts of the West, we shall see, that some opposition was made to idolatry.

† He is surnamed Iconomachus. He died of a severe cholera, in 741.

‡ Fleury, B. XLII. l. Vol. V.

and the true relief of Christ's atonement was so little understood and relished, that the emperor was evidently in the minority through the Christian world. As yet no synods had given a sanction to image-worship. *Precedents of antiquity* were entirely against it. The word of God, which ought to have influenced the minds of men infinitely more than either, was in full opposition to the practice: but so deeply had error prevailed; so conversant had wicked men find it to communicate the indulgence of their crimes, by a zealous attachment to the idolatrous externals; and so little was the Scripture then read or studied, that the subjects of Leo were treated against him, as a tyrant and a persecutor. Even *Germanus, the bishop of Constantinople*, with equal zeal and ignorance, asserted that images had always been used in the Church, and declared his determination to oppose the emperor at all events. It is not necessary to give a detail of the paltry evasions and frivolous arguments, with which he endeavoured to support the idolatry. Determined, however, of strengthening himself against the emperor, he wrote to the bishop of Rome, who warmly supported the same cause, and by reasonings of the same nature. Never was a more instructive lesson given to pastors, to teach the word of God in simplicity and faithfulness. Conscience will be disquieted at times in men not altogether given up to a carnal mind; and, if peace by Jesus Christ, through faith alone, be not steadfastly preached, men distressed for their sins will flee to idolatry with all their might, which will give them a false peace, and confirm them in sinful practices. By the knowledge of Christ crucified alone can we be brought to a sound peace of conscience, and be enabled effectually to serve God and our neighbour in love. We have often, in the course of this history, seen this communion of sound doctrine and holy practice, and we are now stating the reverse of the picture. Nor can the spirit and principles of those Christians, who supported divine truth in the world, be so clearly understood without some knowledge of the real grounds of popery.

He who filled the Roman See at this time was Gregory the second, whom for his open defence and support of idolatry, I shall venture to call the first Pope of Rome. Many superstitions

The first and abuses had been grow-

ing;* and since the decease Pope of Rome.

most part been silent concerning the Roman bishops, because very little of godliness appeared among them. The most honourable part of their conduct related to the encouragement of missions and the propagation of the Gospel among the Gentiles; in which, many who were actuated by the same spirit as those who had been sent by Gregory I. were successful in their provinces; and pure religion, in the fundamentals, at least, was extended into distant regions, while Rome and Italy grew more and more corrupt. The open avowal, however, of idolatry, was reserved for Gregory II. and from this time I look on the bishops of Rome as Antichrist.

Rebellion trod on the heels of idolatry. Greece and its neighbouring islands opposed the emperor, and set up an

* One will deserve to be specified, as it marks the decline from Evangelical purity of doctrine. It was not until the days of this Gregory, that church-yards had a beginning. The dead had been usually interred near the highways, according to the Roman laws, and Christian congregations had followed the practice; at least, they had burial places remote from the city. But, in Gregory's time, the priests and monks began to offer prayers for the deceased, and received gifts from the relations for the performance of these services; on which account these ecclesiastics requested leave of Gregory, that the dead might be interred near the places of the monks' abode, or in the churches or monasteries, that the relations might have a better opportunity of joining in the funeral devotions. Cuthbert, Archbishop of Canterbury, introduced the custom into England in 700; hence the origin of church-yards in this island used as burial grounds. The practice itself is certainly unscriptural, though its first origin was extremely expeditious. The attentive reader will judge better of the progress of the doctrine of purgatory, and the aversion of the ecclesiastics connected with it; above all, of men's departure from the article of justification, which, if it had remained in any degree of purity in the Church, would have effectually excluded these accommodations. See Newcombe's Hist. of the Abbey of St Albans, p. 109. While men rested in Christ, and dared to behold themselves complete in him, they had no temptation to apply to the false refuge of prayers for the departed. In the article of death they immolated their souls and bodies to their Saviour. That hope of glory being lost, they struggled, in vain, through life, with doubts and fears, and departing in uncertainty, left to the charity of friends to help out their supposed defect of merit, and "found no end in wandering mazes lost."

usurper; so infatuated were men with image-worship. But the rebels were routed; and the usurper was taken and beheaded.

Leo, called also Leo III. has been so blackened by contemporary writers, that it is not easy to form a just idea of his character. The same observation may, for similar reasons, be extended to his son and successor. All that can be advanced with certainty is, that his cause was just, and his zeal sincere, though his temper was too warm. He might be a pious Christian; there is doubtless no proof to the contrary. He not only condemned the worshipping of images, but also rejected relics and the intercession of saints. But there lived none at that time capable of doing justice to the holiness of his motives, if indeed, as there is reason to hope, they were holy.

In the year 730 he published an edict against images, and after having in vain endeavoured to bring over Germanus to his views, he deposed him, and set up Anastasius in his room, who supported the emperor. There was a porch in the palace of Constantinople, in which was an image of Christ on the cross. Leo, who saw that it had been made an engine of idolatry, sent an officer to pull it down. Some women, who were there, intreated that it might be spared, but in vain. The officer mounted a ladder and struck three blows with a hatchet on the face of the figure, when the women threw him down by pulling away the ladder, and murdered him on the spot;* however, the image was pulled down and burnt, and a plain cross was set up in its room; for Leo only objected to the erection of a human figure. The women afterwards insulted Anastasius, as having profaned holy things. Leo put several persons to death, who had been concerned in the murder, and, such was

* This first instance of idolatrous zeal which occurs in Christendom, shows that the worshippers of images naturally connect the idea of sanctity with the wood or stone, and therefore the charge of literally worshipping inanimate matter, which the Scriptures make against pagan idolaters, is just when applied to popish idolaters. By an induction from particulars, it were easy to prove, that the cases are similar, and, that futile distinctions and evasions may equally be applied to both, to cover and soften what cannot be vindicated in either.

the triumph of idolatry, that the murderers are honoured as martyrs, by the Greek Church, to this day! More blood was spilt on the occasion, partly through the vehemence of the emperor, and partly through the obstinacy of the idolaters.

The news flew to Rome, where the same rage for idolatry prevailed, and the emperor's statues were pulled down and trodden under foot. Italy was thrown into confusion. Serious attempts were made to elect another emperor: and the pope encouraged these attempts. He also prohibited the Italians from paying tribute to Leo any longer, say the Greek writers, and some of the partizans of the Roman See, while the French writers represent him as endeavouring to quell the rebellion. It is difficult to give a fair statement of Gregory's conduct on this occasion; certain it is, that his obstinate defence of idolatry actually fomented the rebellion, and in the end, established the temporal power of his successors on the ruins of the imperial authority.† His conduct was indirectly rebellious, if it was not directly so; for he wrote to Anastasius, that if he did not return to the catholic faith, he should be deprived of his dignity.‡ Gregory must have known, that this was, in effect, to oppose the emperor himself. This was one of the last acts of the Roman prelate. He was succeeded by Gregory III. who wrote to the emperor in these arrogant terms: "Because you are unlearned and ignorant, we are obliged to write to you rude discourses, but full of sense and the word of God. We conjure you to quit your pride, and hear us with humility.—You say that we adore stones, walls, and boards. It is not so, my lord; but those symbols make us recollect the persons whose names they bear, and exalt our grovelling minds. We do not look upon them as gods;—but if it be the image of Jesus, we say, "Lord, help us." If it be the image of his mother, we say, "Pray to your Son to save us." If it be of a martyr, we say, "St. Stephen, pray for us."§—We might, as having the

* See Mosheim, Cent. VIII. C. III.

† Fleury, C. XLII. 7.

‡ From these specimens the reader may judge whether the pope or the emperor was better acquainted with the Scripture. A pagan philosopher would have defended gentile idolatry much in the same manner; and the dependence, which both the pagan and the

power of St. Peter, pronounce punishments against you; but as you have pronounced the curse upon yourself, let it stick to you.—You write to us to assemble a general council; of which there is no need. Do you cease to persecute images, and all will be quiet.—We fear not your threats; for if we go a league from Rome, toward Campania, we are secure.”—Certainly this is the language of Antichrist supporting idolatry by pretences to infallibility, and despising both civil magistrates and ecclesiastical councils.

I cannot do justice to Leo because we have not his answers to the pope. But

Leo excommunicated by the Pope, A. D. 752.

perhaps the language of Gregory will enable the reader for himself to vindicate the emperor. It is not to be wondered at, that Leo refused to have any further intercourse

with the Roman prelate. In 752, Gregory, in a council, excommunicated all, who should remove or speak contemptuously of images. And Italy being now in a state of rebellion, Leo fitted out a fleet, which he sent thither; but it was wrecked in the Adriatic. He continued, however, to enforce his edict against images in the east, while the patrons of the fashionable idolatry supported it by various sophisms. In all his conduct Gregory now acted like a temporal prince: he supported a rebellious duke against Luitprand, king of the Lombards, his master, and fearing the vengeance of the latter, he applied to Charles Martel, mayor of the palace in France,* offering to withdraw his obedience from the emperor, and give the consulship of Rome

to Charles, if he would take him under his protection.* Charles, however, by his wars with the Saracens, was prevented from complying with the pope's request. But he left his power and ambitious views to his son and successor Pepin. Charles, Gregory, and Leo, all died in the same year 741, and left to their successors the management of their respective views and contentions.

Ch. Martel, Gregory III. and Leo, die in the same year, A. D. 741.

Constantine VI. surnamed Copronymus, inherited his father Leo's zeal against images: and, as both the east and the west were precipitating themselves into idolatry, hence neither of these princes have met with a fair and impartial historian.† Meanwhile the Arabians persecuted the Christians with unrelenting barbarity in the East, while the real Church of God was desolated on all sides, and suffered equally from enemies without and within her pale. Zachary was the next pope after Gregory III. an aspiring politician, who fomented discord among the Lombards, and, by his intrigues, obtained from their king Luitprand an addition to the patrimony of the Church. The Roman prelates had ceased to worship God in spirit and in truth, and were now become mere secular princes.

Zachary showed how well he merited the title of a temporal governor. He had the address to preserve still a nominal subjection to the Greek emperor, while he seized all the power of the Roman dukedom for himself, and looked out for a protector both against his lawful sovereign and against the Lombards. This was Pepin, the son and successor of Charles Martel in France, who sent a case of conscience to be resolved by the pope, namely, whether it would be just in himself to depose his sovereign Childeric III. and to reign in his room.‡ Zachary was not ashamed to answer in the affirmative: Pepin then threw his master into a monastery,

Pope Zachary dies, A. D. 752.

popish place on the image, demonstrates, that they imagined the power of the saint or demon to be intimately connected with the image, which represents, as it were, the body, of which the object of their worship is the soul, so justly do the Scriptures denounce idolaters as literally worshipping the works of their own hands, and the men of sin as worshipping devils. (1 Tim. iv.) Sophistry may evade, but it cannot confute. When men cease to hold the Head and to be satisfied with Christ as their all, they fall into these or similar errors. The heart, which feeds not the word of the living God, as its proper nutriment, will feed on the shadow of idolatry.

* This is he who had stopped the progress of the Saracen arms. Mayor of the palace, was the title of the prime minister in France, who during the reigns of a succession of weak princes, governed with sovereign power.

† This shows that the charge of rebellion against the emperor is not unjustly made against this pope.

‡ These phrases relate some ridiculous things of Copronymus, which only prove the strength of his own prejudices, p. 346. And Fleury follows him as his guide.

† Fleury, XLIII. l. calls him a weak and contemptible prince. So the French kings

and assumed the title of king. Zachary died soon after, viz. in the year 752.

The Greek emperor was unable to cope with the subtlety of the pope and the violence of the Lombards. Ravenna, the capital of his dominions in Italy, was taken by king Astulphus, who had succeeded Rachis, the successor of Luitprand. This government, called the Exarchate, had continued in Italy about a hundred and fourscore years. Stephen, the successor of Zachary, finding the superior strength of the Lombards, now solicited the aid of Constantine, who was too much

Constantine VII. holds a council of 338 bishops, A. D. 754.

employed in the East, to send any forces into Italy. In the year 754, the emperor held a council of 338 bishops, to decide the controversy concerning images. They express themselves not improperly on the nature of the heresy.*

"Jesus Christ," say they, "hath delivered us from idolatry, and hath taught us to adore him in spirit and in truth. But the devil not being able to endure the beauty of the Church, hath insensibly brought back idolatry under the appearance of Christianity, persuading men to worship the creature, and to take for God a work, to which they give the name of Jesus Christ."

Reinforced by the decrees of this council against image-worship, Constantine burnt the images, and demolished the walls, which were painted with representations of Christ or the saints; and seemed determined to exterminate all the vestiges of idolatry. In the mean time, in Italy, Stephen, pressed by the victorious arms of Astulphus, applied himself to Pepin, and wrote to all the French dukes, exhorting them to succour St. Peter, and promising them the remission of their sins, a hundred fold in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting. So rapidly advanced the popedom! A letter now was brought to the pope from the emperor, ordering him to go to Astulphus, and demand the restitution of Ravenna. Superstition was every where so strong, that there was no danger incurred

had been for some time. But Gregory I. would have told Pepin, that the weakness of the sovereign's faculties gave the servant no right to usurp the master's authority. Gregory feared God: whereas idolatry had hardened the hearts of these popes, and left them no law but their own insatiable ambition.

* Fleury, XLIII. 7.

by such a step; and the weakness of the emperor, and the distraction of his affairs, allowed him not to give any other sort of succour to Italy. Stephen sent to the king of the Lombards, to demand a pass. This was granted, and he set out from Rome, to go to Astulphus. A short time before he undertook this journey, messengers had arrived to him from Pepin, encouraging him to go along with them into Franco. Stephen arrived at Pavia, the capital of Lombardy, and after an ineffectual interview with the king, went into France, where Pepin treated him with all possible respect, and promised to undertake an expedition into Italy to relieve the Roman Sec. Stephen anointed with oil the king of the Franks; and, by the authority of St. Peter, forbade the French lords, on pain of excommunication, to choose a king of another race.

Thus did these two ambitious men support one another in their schemes of rapacity and injustice. In the pope the evil was aggravated by the pretence of religion.* "It is you," says Stephen, "whom God hath chosen for this purpose by his prescience from all eternity. For whom he hath predestinated, them he also called; and, whom he called, them he also justified." It must be owned, that Stephen was fitter to conduct a negotiation, than to expound a text.

Pepin attacked Astulphus so vigorously, that, in the end, he obliged him to deliver the Exarchate, that is Ravenna, and twenty-one cities besides, to the pope. Constantine, alarmed at the danger of his dominions, in Italy, sent an embassy to king Pepin, to press him to deliver the Exarchate to its rightful sovereign: but in vain. In the issue, the pope became the proprietor of Ravenna and its dependencies, and added rapacity to his rebellion.

From this time he not only assumed the tone of infallibility and spiritual dominion, but became literally a temporal

* Fleury, a much better divine than Stephen, is struck with the absurdity of the allusion, XLIII. 15. If I am somewhat more secular in this narration than in general, the importance of the subject, which is nothing less than the establishment of the papal power, and the vindication of faithful witnesses, who from age to age protested against it, may afford a sufficient apology. Popery once established, I shall not so minutely attend her steps, but seek the children of God, wherever they are to be found.

prince. On the death of Astulphus, Desiderius, duke of Tuscany, in order to obtain the succession, promised Stephen, to deliver to him some other cities, which the Lombards had taken from the emperor. Stephen embraced the offer without hesitation, assisted Desiderius in his views, and obtained for the pope the duchy of Ferrara, and two other fortresses. The aged emperor, in the mean time, continued to exterminate idolatry in the East; but, whether his motives were pious or not, our ignorance of his private character will not suffer us to ascertain. The ambitious and

Death of
Pope Ste-
phen III.
A.D. 757.

successful Stephen held the papedom five years, and died in 757. His successor Paul, even before his appointment

to that dignity, had taken care to cultivate the friendship and secure the protection of Pope. The maritime parts of Italy still obeyed the emperor, and these, together with the Lombards, threatened the pope, from time to time; whence he was induced to write frequently to the king of France for assistance.*

Constantine forbid every where the addressing of prayers to the Virgin Mary, or to other saints, and discountenanced the monks through his dominions. He is said to have treated the worshippers of images with great barbarity, and to have been profane and vicious in his own practice. But such censures were the natural and obvious effect of his conduct.

In the year 768 died Pepin, the great supporter of the papedom. Its grandeur was,

Death of
Pepin,
A.D. 768.

Adrian I.
elected
pope,
A.D. 772.

however, not yet arrived at maturity. Adrian, who was elected pope in 772, was not inferior to his predecessors in the arts of ambitious intrigue. He received the homage of Rieti and Spoleto, towns of Lombardy, and allowed them

to choose a duke among themselves. Partly by these means, and still more by the powerful alliance of Charles, the son and successor of Pepin, commonly called Charlemagne, for his great exploits, he strengthened himself against the hostilities of king Desiderius. He received from the French king a confirmation of Pepin's donative of the Exarchate, with some considerable additions of territory.

The friendship of ambitious men is cemented by views of interest. This was exactly the case of Charles and Adrian. In a superstitious age, the king derived from the sacred character of the pope the most substantial addition to his reputation, and was enabled to expel Desiderius entirely from his dominions. In the year 774, he assumed the title of king of France and Lombardy. The last king of the Lombards was sent into a monastery in France, where he ended his days. In the next year, the emperor Constantine died, after having vigorously opposed image-worship all his reign. At the same time also died the Mahometan Caliph Abmansor, the founder of Bagdad, which from that time became the residence of the Saracen monarchs; whose empire then began to carry more the appearance of a regular government, and ceased to be so troublesome to the remains of the old Roman empire, as it had formerly been.

Leo, the son and successor of Constantine, trode in the steps of his father and grandfather, and exercised severities on the supporters of image-worship. But, as he died in the year 780,* his wife Irene as-

Charle-
magne
assumes
the title of
king of
France
and Lom-
bardy.
A. D. 774.

Leo IV.
dies.
A. D. 780.

sumed the government in the name of her son Constantine, who was only ten years old. She openly and zealously supported idolatry. The East was so eagerly addicted to it, that there wanted only the authority of a sovereign to render it triumphant. Images gained the ascendancy; and the monastic life, which either the piety or the prudence of three emperors,—for I cannot ascertain their real character,—had much discouraged, became again victorious in Greece and Asia.†

In 784 Irene wrote to Adrian, desiring his presence at a council to be held for the support of image-worship; at least that he would send legates to it. Tarasius, bishop of Constantinople, just appointed, and perfectly harmonizing with

* Fleury, XLIV. 16.

† If the plan, on which I have chosen to write a Church-history, need the authority of any writer to support it, the words of Fleury are very decisive, B. XLIV. 17. "The temporal affairs of the Church, nay, of the Roman Church, do not belong to an ecclesiastical history."

* It is remarkable, that Fleury blames this pope for representing his secular affairs as if they were spiritual. 31.

the views of the empress, wrote to the same purport. Adrian's answer is worthy of a pope. He expresses his joy at the prospect of the establishment of image-worship; and, at the same time, testifies his displeasure at the presumption of Tarasius, in calling himself universal patriarch: he demands the restoration of St. Peter's patrimony, which, during the schism, the emperors of Constantinople had withheld; and sets before the empress the magnificent pattern of Charlemagne, who had given to the Roman Church, to be enjoyed for ever, provinces, cities, and castles, once in the possession of the Lombards, but which of right belonged to St. Peter. Ambition and avarice were thus covered with the thin veil of superstition. But this was the age of clerical usurpations. Large domains were now commonly annexed, by superstitious princes, to the Church, for the pardon of their sins; but the pope was the greatest gainer by this traffic. That, which is most to our purpose to observe, is the awful departure, which had commonly been made, throughout Christendom, from the all-important article of justification. While this is firmly believed and revered, it is impossible for men to think of commuting for their offences with Heaven; and it is itself the surest defence against clerical encroachments, superstition, idolatry and hypocrisy. But the pulpits were silent on this doctrine: during this whole century false religion grew without any check or molestation; and vices, both in public and private life, increased in proportion.

In the year 787 the second council of Nice was held under the empress: and of such a council it is sufficient to say,

Irene calls
a Council
at Nice,
A. D. 787.

that it confirmed idolatrous worship.* Pope Adrian, having received the acts of the council, sent them to Charlemagne, that he might procure

the approbation of the bishops of the West. But here his expectations were disappointed. United in politics by the coincidence of interested views, they were however found to disagree in religious sentiments. Charlemagne, though illiterate himself, was one of the greatest patrons of learning: and, if he may be supposed to have been in earnest in any

opinions, he would naturally be much influenced by the famous Alcuin, an Englishman, whom he cherished and esteemed. The customs and habits of the West were far from universally favouring the reigning idolatry. I am anxiously looking for the features of the Church of Christ in this very gloomy period, and I conjecture that her existence was most probably to be found in the Churches lately planted, or, in those, which were then in an infant state. Our own island was decidedly, at that time, hostile to idolatry. The British Churches execrated the second council of Nice,* and some even of the Italian bishops protested against the growing evil. Nor is it probable, that the churches of Germany, now forming, were at all disposed to receive it. Men, who first receive Christianity from zealous teachers, are simple and sincere; nor is it easy to convince an ingenuous person, that idolatry, however qualified or explained, is allowable on the plan of the Scriptures, either of the Old or New Testament. France itself had, as yet, shown no disposition positively in favour of idolatry. The Roman See, alone, in Europe, had in form supported and defended it. And experience proves, that the greatest stages of degeneracy are to be found in the Churches which have subsisted the longest.

Charlemagne could not but be struck at the discordancy of the Nicene council with the habits of the West; and was therefore so far from receiving, with implicit faith, the recommendation of it by pope Adrian, that he ordered the bishops of the West to examine the merits of the question. The issue was, the publication of the Carolin books, in which the famous Alcuin had at least a distinguished share. In these the authors find fault with a former synod held in Greece, under Constantine, which forbade the use of images. For they held the dangerous opinion of Gregory 1st, namely, that these might be set up in churches, and serve as books for the instruction of the people. But they condemn, in very free terms, the late Grecian synod, which enjoined the worship of images. They find fault with the flattering addresses made by the Greek bishops to pope Adrian. They

* This was the seventh General Council; and the second of Nice. It began in September 787.

* Hoveden Annal. pars prior. p. 232. Usher, Annals, pp. 19, 20. The former of these writers tells us, that Alcuin composed the Carolin books.

allow the primacy of St. Peter's See, but are far from founding their faith on the pope's decisions. They condemn the worship of images by scriptural arguments, by no means impertinent or contemptible. These, however, need not be repeated on the present occasion.*

Engelbert, the ambassador of Charles, presented these books to Adrian. This ambitious politician, who subsisted by the protection of Charlemagne, and who was concerned to maintain the honour of his See, replied with great prudence. It is evident, from his whole conduct, that his object was the temporal interests of the papacy. Hence his answer to Charles was tame and insipid, and his defence of image-worship weak and inconclusive; Charles and the French Churches persevered in their own middle practice: they used images, but they abhorred the adoration of them. In the year

A synod held at Frankfort, A. D. 794, a synod was held, consisting of 300 bishops, who condemned the second council

of Nice, and the worship of images. In this synod, Paulinus, bishop of Aquileia, in Italy, bore some share. All his life, however, Adrian continued on good terms

with Charlemagne. He died in the course of the next year, and was succeeded by Leo III. Political intrigue, and secular affairs, not theological study, was then the practice of Roman bishops. The Irish, at

this time, particularly excelled in divinity, travelled through various countries, and became renowned for their learning; and the superior light, exhibited by England and France, in the controversy of images, seems to prove that those countries, in their knowledge of Scripture, and also in their regard for its doctrines, far exceeded Rome. Yet so strongly were men prejudiced in favour of the dignity of the Roman See, that it still remained in the height of its power, and was enabled in process of time to communicate its idolatrous abominations through Europe. In the East the worship of images was triumphant, but as yet not universal.†

This chapter contains the narrative of the most fatal events which the Church had ever seen. The Arian heresy had disfigured and deeply wounded her constitution, but she had recovered, and confounded this adversary. The Pelagian poison had operated for a time; but its detection and expulsion had even contributed to recover her health, and to restore her to a great degree of apostolical purity. Other heresies, which affected the doctrine of the Trinity, had been successfully opposed: superstition, for a number of centuries, had sullied her beauty, but had left her vitals untouched. Idolatry, at length, aided by the same superstitious propensity, prevailed to disunite her from Christ, her living head. The reigning powers, both in the east and the west, were overgrown with false worship: even those parts of the west, which as yet were not disposed to receive idolatry,

were deeply prepared for the gradual admission of it, partly by the growing superstition, and partly by the submission of all the European Churches to the domination of the Roman See. There the seat of Antichrist was firmly fixed. Rebellion against the lawful power of the magistrates, the most arrogant claims to infallibility, and the support of image-worship, conspired with the temporal dominion lately obtained by the bishop of Rome, to render him the tyrant of the Church. His dominions, indeed, were not large; but, in conjunction with the proud pretensions of his ecclesiastical character they gave him a superlative dignity in the eyes of all Europe. It was evident that the face of the whole Church was altered: from the year 727, to about the year 2000, we have the dominion of the Beast;‡ and the prophesying of the witnesses in sackcloth, which was to continue 1260 days, or forty and two months, that is, for 1260 years. We must now look for the real Church, either in distinct individual saints, who, in the midst of popery, were preserved by effectual grace in vital union with the Son of God, or, in

Corruptions of Christ's religion had begun to prevail, A. D. 727.

* See Du Pin, Councils of 8th century.

† This is allowed by Du Pin. Councils of 8th century.

‡ I mean, toward the close of this century, viz. about the year 797, destituted her own Constantine, and put out his eyes with such

violence, that he lost his life. This monster, a worthy patroness of idolatry, then reigned alone, and conspired with the pope of Rome, in the support of Satan's kingdom. She was deposed and banished by Nicephorus, A. D. 802.

† Rev. xi. and xiii.

associations of true Christians, formed in different regions, which were in a state of persecution and much affliction. Where then was the Church in the eighth century? She still subsisted; and the opposition made to idolatry by Charles and the council of Frankfort, demonstrates her existence. Nothing but the influence of principles very opposite to those which were fashionable at Rome, can account for such events, at a time when the dignity of the Roman See was held in universal veneration. After all, it is in the propagation of the Gospel among the Pagans, that the real Church is chiefly to be seen in this century. Some real work of this kind was carrying on, while the popedom was forming; and, by the adorable Providence of God, pious missionaries, who entered not into the recent controversies, but were engaged in actions purely spiritual, were patronized and supported in preaching Christ among foreign nations by the same popes of Rome, who were opposing his grace in their own.* Their ambition led them to cherish the zeal of the missionaries, but with how different a spirit! To this scene let us now direct our attention.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS CENTURY, INCLUDING THE LIFE OF BONIFACE, ARCHBISHOP OF MENTZ.

WILLIBROD,† with other English missionaries, continued to labour with success in the conversion of the Frisons. His episcopal seat was, as we have seen,‡ at Utrecht; for fifty years he preached, founded churches and monasteries, and appointed new bishops. The

* Should any persons startle that I call image-worship by no better name than idolatry, and rank pagan and papal practices in the same class, I would refer such to the censure of St. Paul on the Galatians iv. 8, 9. Idolatry being with them merely mental, originated in a self-righteous principle, and the Apostle looks on them as worshippers of false gods, and informs them that they were returning again to bondage. How much more justly may image-worship be called "the doing service to them which by nature are no gods," where the idolatry is both mental and external!

† Fleury, fifth Vol. XLI. 1.

‡ See page 533 of this volume.

consequence of his labours was, that great numbers of Pagans were received within the pale of the Church.

The* great light of Germany in this century was an Englishman named Winfrid, born at Kirton in Devonshire, about the year 680. He was brought up in the monastic life from infancy. His residence was in the monastery of Nutecll, in the diocese of Winchester, which was afterwards destroyed by the Danes, and was never rebuilt. Here he became acquainted with the sacred and secular learning of the times. At the age of 30, he was ordained priest, on the recommendation of his abbot, and laboured with much zeal in preaching the word of God. His spirit was ardent, and he longed to be employed as a missionary, in the conversion of Pagans. The example of a number of pious persons of his own country might, no doubt, have great influence with him; for we have seen already, that the zeal of spreading the Gospel was peculiarly strong in the British isles. He went over with two monks into Friesland about the year 716. He proceeded to Utrecht, "to water, where Willibrod had PLANTED;" but finding that circumstances rendered it impracticable at present to preach the Gospel there, he returned into England with his companions, to his monastery.

Winfrid,
an English
Missionary,
A. D. 716.

On the death of the abbot of Nutecll, the society would have elected Winfrid in his room; but the monk, steady to his purpose, refused to accept the Presidency; and, with recommendatory letters from the bishop of Winchester, went to Rome, and presented himself to the pope, expressing a desire of being employed in the conversion of infidels. Gregory II. encouraged his zeal, and gave him a commission of the most ample and unlimited nature in the year 719.

With this commission Winfrid went into Bavaria and Thuringia. In the first country he reformed the Churches, in the second he was successful in the conversion of infidels. Here also he observed, how true religion, where it had been planted, was almost destroyed by false teachers: some pastors, indeed, were zealous for the service of God, but others were given up to scandalous vices:

* Fleury, XLI. 35, &c. Alban Butler, Vol. 6.

the English missionary beheld their state, and the ill effects of it on the people with sorrow; and he laboured with all his might, to recover them to true repentance.

It was with sincere delight that he afterwards learned that the door, which had been shut against his first attempts in Friesland, was now opened for preaching the Gospel in that country. Ratbod, king of the Frisians, who had planted idolatry afresh among his subjects, was dead, and the obstacles were removed. Winfrid returned into Friesland, and for three years co-operated with Willibrod. The pale of the Church was hence enlarged; churches were erected; many received the word of God; and idolatry was more and more subdued.

Willibrod, declining in strength through old age, chose Winfrid for his successor. I have before observed, that the duration of his pastoral labours, in his mission, was no less than fifty years. The example of this great and holy person had long before this stirred up others to labour in the best of causes. Soon after that he, with eleven companions in 690, had begun to preach the Gospel in

Two other English Missionaries, A. D. 694.

Friesland, two brothers of the English nation went over into the country of the ancient Saxons, in order to preach to the idolaters. They were both called Ewald. They arrived in this country about the year 694, and meeting with a certain steward, desired him to conduct them to his lord. They were employed all the way in prayer, in singing psalms and hymns. The barbarians fearing lest these men might draw their lord over to Christianity, murdered both the brothers; and thus, toward the close of the foregoing century, it pleased God to take to himself two persons who had devoted themselves to preach the Gospel of his Son among the heathen. The time of the most peculiar visitation of Germany was reserved for the age which we are now reviewing.

It must have been extremely delighted to Willibrod, to have met with a conductor as zealous and sincere as Winfrid. However, the latter declined the offer, because the pope had enjoined him to preach in the eastern parts of Germany; and he felt himself bound to perform his promise. It is not possible, indeed, to conceive such a man as Gregory to have had any other views, than those of accu-

lar ambition in exacting this promise from Winfrid. But it seems also equally apparent, that the motives of the latter were holy and spiritual. Willibrod acquiesced in Winfrid's desires, and dismissed him with his blessing. The younger missionary departed immediately, and came into Hesse, to a place called Omenbourg, belonging to two brothers, who were nominal Christians, but practical idolaters. Winfrid's labours were successful, both on them and their subjects: and, throughout Hesse, or at least a very great part of it, even to the confines of Saxony, he erected the standard of truth, and upheld it with much zeal, to the confusion of the kingdom of Satan. It ought not, however, to be concealed, that Winfrid suffered great hardships in a country so poor and uncultivated as the greater part of Germany then was; that he supported himself at times by the labour of his hands, and was exposed to imminent peril from the rage of the obstinate Pagans.

After some time he returned to Rome, was kindly received by Gregory II. and was consecrated bishop of the new German Churches, by the name of Boniface. There seems, even in that little circumstance, something of the policy of the Roman See. A Roman name was more likely to procure from the German converts respect to the pope, than an English one. Gregory, moreover, solicitous to preserve his dignity, exacted from the new bishop an oath of subjection to the papal authority, conceived in the strongest terms; a circumstance, remarkably proving both the audacity of Gregory and the superstition of the times. Boniface armed with letters from the pope, and what was far better, encouraged by the addition of fresh labourers from England, returned to the scenes of his mission. Coming into Hesse, he confirmed, by imposition of hands, several* who had already been baptized, and exerted himself with much zeal against the idolatrous superstitions of the Germans. An oak of prodigious size had been an instrument of much Pagan delusion: his sincerest converts advised him to cut it down; and he followed their counsel. It ought to be observed, that the famous Charles Martel protected him with his civil authority; for the dominion of the French extended a considerable way into Germany. It

does not appear, however, that Boniface made any other use of this circumstance, than what the most conscientious ecclesiastic may do, wherever the Christian religion is established by the laws.

Daniel, bishop of Winchester, about the year 723, wrote to Boniface concerning the best method of dealing with

The ad- vice of Boniface, A. D. 723. idolaters. "Do not contradict," says he, "in a direct manner their accounts of the genealogy of their gods; allow that they were born from

one another in the same way as mankind are; this concession will give you the advantage of proving that there was a time when they had no existence.—Ask them who governed the world before the birth of their gods—ask them, if these gods have ceased to propagate. If they have not, show them the consequence; namely, that the gods must be infinite in number, and that no man can rationally be at ease in worshipping any of them, lest he should, by that means, offend one, who is more powerful.—Argue thus with them, not in the way of insult; but with temper and moderation; and take opportunities to contrast these absurdities with the Christian doctrine; let the Pagans be rather ashamed than incensed by your oblique mode of stating these subjects.—Show them the insufficiency of their plea of antiquity; inform them that idolatry did anciently prevail over the world, but that Jesus Christ was manifested, in order to reconcile men to God by his grace." Piety and good sense appear to have predominated in these instructions, and we have here proofs, in addition to those already given, of the grace of God conferred on our ancestors during the heptarchy.

Boniface preserved a correspondence with other friends in England, as well as with Daniel. From his native country he was supplied also, as we have seen, with fellow-labourers. In Thuringia he confirmed the churches, delivered them from heresies, and false brethren, and the work still prospered in his hand.

In the mean time, like all upright and conscientious men, he found himself often involved in difficulties, and doubted in what manner he should regulate his conduct in regard to scandalous priests, who greatly obstructed his mission. He laid his doubts before his old friend the bishop of Winchester.* Should he avoid all

communication with them, he might offend the court of France, without whose civil protection he could not proceed in his mission. Should he preserve connexion with them, he was afraid of bringing guilt upon his conscience. Daniel advises him to endure, with patience, what he could not amend: he counsels him not to make a schism in the Church, under pretence of purging it; and, at the same time, exhorts him to exercise church-discipline on notorious offenders.

Boniface desired Daniel also to send him the book of the prophets, "which," says he, "the abbot Winbert, formerly my master, left at his death, written in very distinct characters. A greater consolation in my old age I cannot receive; for I can find no book like it in this country; and, as my sight grows weak, I cannot easily distinguish the small letters, which are joined close together in the sacred volumes which are at present in my possession." Do these things seem to belong to the character of an ambitious and insidious ecclesiastic, or to that of a simple and upright servant of Jesus Christ?

The reputation of this Saint,—such I shall venture to call him, from the evidence of facts,—was spread through the greatest part of Europe; and many from England poured into Germany to connect themselves with him. These dispersed themselves in the country, and preached in the villages of Hesse and Thuringia.

In 732, Boniface received the title of Archbishop,* from Gregory III. who supported his mission with the same spirit, with which Gregory II. had done. Encouraged by a letter sent to him from Rome, he proceeded to erect new churches, and to extend the profession of the Gospel. At this time, he found the Bavarian churches disturbed by an heretic called Eremvolf, who would have seduced the people into idolatry. Boniface condemned him according to the canons, freed the country from his devices, and restored the discipline of the Church.

About the year 733, Burchard and Lullus were invited from England by Boniface, who made the former bishop of Wurtzburg, where Kilian had preached,

Boniface made an archbishop.

A. D. 732.

* Bonif. Ep. 3. Fleury, B. XLL toward the end.

* Boniface was the first archbishop of Mentz.

and suffered martyrdom, about fifty years before. He was abundantly successful during the labours of ten years, by which his strength was exhausted: he gave up his bishopric in 752, and died soon after. Butler, Vol. X.

Some time after, Boniface wrote to Northelm, archbishop of Canterbury, in a strain, which equally shows the chari-

Curious
letter of
Boniface
to the
archbishop
of Can-
terbury.

Visit
Rome,

A. D. 738.

ty and sincerity of his spirit, and the superstition of the times.* In 738, he again visited Rome, being far advanced in life; and, after some stay, he induced several Englishmen, who resided there, to join with him in his German mission.—Returning into Bavaria, by the desire of duke Odilo, he restored the purity of the faith, and prevailed against the artifices of some seducers, who had done much mischief both by false doctrine and flagitious example. He established three new bishoprics in the country, at Saltzburg, Freisingen, and Ratisbon. That of Passau had been fixed before. It must, however, be observed, that the successes and conquests of the Carlovingian princes much facilitated his labours in Germany.

In writing to Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury,†—after testifying his zealous adherence to the See of Rome, and his submission to its authority, he exhorts him to discharge his duty faithfully, notwithstanding the difficulties to which good pastors were exposed. “Let us fight,” says he, “for the Lord: for we live in days of affliction and anguish. Let us die, if God so please, for the laws of our fathers, that with them we may obtain the heavenly inheritance. Let us not be as dumb dogs, sleepy watchmen, or selfish hirelings, but as careful and vigilant pastors, preaching to all ranks, as far as God shall enable us, in season and out of season, as Gregory writes in his pastoral.”

Adalbert,‡ a Frenchman, a proud enthusiast, and Clement, a Scotchman, pretended that Christ, by his descent into hell, delivered the souls of the damned. The former was deceived by the

most absurd and extravagant delusions, and the latter was infamous in life and conversation. Gevilieb also, a German bishop, who associated with them, had actually committed murder; but so ignorant and depraved were the rulers of the German Christians, that he was still allowed to continue a bishop without infamy. Boniface, who saw the evil of these things more deeply than others, desired that Adalbert and Clement might be imprisoned by the authority of duke Carloman, and be secluded from society, that they might not corrupt others by their poisonous sentiments, and that Gevilieb might be deposed from his bishopric. He gained his point in the condemnation and imprisonment of the two former, and in the deposition of the latter. He, who has no charity for souls, and no prospects beyond those of this life, may harshly condemn the missionary; but every serious and candid mind will applaud the sincerity and uprightness of his intentions, and will wish for the exercise of discipline, though in a manner somewhat irregular, provided substantial justice be done, rather than that men should be allowed to corrupt their fellow-creatures, without mercy and without control. Of the guilt of these three men, there is abundance of evidence.

Boniface, at length, was fixed at Mentz, and he is commonly called archbishop of that city. The increase of his dignity does not, however, seem to have diminished his zeal and laboriousness. His connexion with England was constantly preserved; and, it is in the epistolary correspondence with his own country, that the most striking evidence of his pious views appears. In one of his epistles,* he mentions his sufferings from pagans, false Christians, and immoral pastors: he feels, as a man, these hardships, but intimates his desire of the honour of dying for the love of Him, who died for us. He often begged for books from England, especially those of Bede, whom he styles the lamp of the Church. He wrote also a circular letter to the bishops and people of England, entreating their prayers for the success of his missions.

Many persons, while in obscure life, have professed much zeal for the service of God, but have declined in earnestness, as they advanced in years, particularly if

* Ep. R. V. See Fleury, XI. II. 32.

† Bonif. Ep. 103. Fleury, XI. II. 37.

‡ Butler's Lives, Boniface. Fleury, XLII.

they acquired honour and dignity in the world. This was not the case with Boniface. Though oppressed with age and infirmities, and greatly revered in the whole Christian world, he determined to return into Friesland. Before his departure, he acted in all things as if he had a strong presentiment of what was to happen. He appointed Lullus, an Englishman, his successor, as archbishop of Mentz, and wrote to the abbot of St. Denys, desiring him to acquaint the king, Pepin, that he and his friends believed he had not long to live. He begged, that the king would show kindness to the missionaries whom he should leave behind him. "Some of them," said he, "are priests dispersed into divers parts, for the good of the Church: others are monks, settled in small monasteries, where they instruct the children. There are aged men with me, who have long assisted me in my labours. I fear, lest after my death, they should be dispersed, and the disciples, who are near the pagan frontiers, should lose the faith of Jesus Christ. I beg that my son Lullus may be confirmed in the episcopal office, and that he may teach the priests, the monks, and the people. I hope that he will perform these duties. That, which most afflicts me, is, that the priests, who are on the pagan frontiers, are very indigent. They can obtain bread, but no clothes, unless they be assisted, as they have been by me. Let me know your answer, that I may live or die with more cheerfulness."

It is most probable that he received an answer agreeable to his benevolent spirit, as, before his departure, he ordained Lullus his successor, with the consent of king Pepin.† He went by the Rhine into Friesland, where, assisted by Eoban, whom he had ordained bishop of Utrecht, after the death of Willibrod, he brought great numbers of pagans within the pale of the Church. He had appointed a day to confirm those whom he had baptized. In waiting for them he encamped with his followers on the banks of the Bordne, a river which then divided East and West Friesland. His intention was to confirm, by imposition of hands, the converts in the plains of Dockum. On the appointed day, he beheld, in the morning, not the new converts, whom he expected, but a troop of angry pagans,

armed with shields and lances. The servants went out to resist, but Boniface, with calm intrepidity, said to his followers, "Children, forbear to fight; the Scripture forbids us to render evil for evil. The day, which I have long waited for, is come; hope in God, and he will save your souls." Thus did he prepare the priests and the rest of his companions for martyrdom. The pagans attacked them furiously, and slew the whole company, fifty-two in number, besides Boniface himself. This happened A. D. 755. in the year 755, in the fortieth year after his arrival in Germany, and in the 75th of his age. The manner in which his death was resented by the Christian Germans, shows the high veneration in which he was held through the country, and sufficiently confutes the notion, which some have held, of his imperious and fraudulent conduct. They collected a great army, attacked the pagans, slew many of them, pillaged their country, and carried off their wives and children. Those, who remained pagans in Friesland, were glad to obtain peace by submitting to Christian rites. Such a method of showing regard for Boniface, might be expected from a rude and ill-informed multitude. But, rude as they were, they had the gift of common sense, and could judge whether the Apostle of the Germans was their sincere friend or not; and their judgment is with me decisive.

A collection of Boniface's letters has been preserved, some of which have already been mentioned. That the reformation of the clergy, and the conversion of infidels, were the objects of his zeal, appears from his literary correspondence, no less than from the whole tenour of his life.* In the first letter to Nithardus, in which he takes the name of Winfrid, he exhorts him to condemn the things of time and sense, and to devote himself to the study of the Scriptures, which he recommends as the highest wisdom. "Nothing," says he, "can you search after more honourably in youth, or enjoy more comfortably in old age, than the knowledge of Holy Scripture."

In another letter, he exhorts the priest Herefrede, in his own name, and in that of eight bishops, who were with him, to show the memoir, which they sent him,

* Ep. 92.

† Fleury, XLII. 20.

* Du Pin, 8th Cent. Bonif.

to the king of the Mercians. The purport of it was to implore that prince to check the debaucheries and disorders of his kingdom.

Excessively attached as he was, both to the Roman See and to monastic institutions, he knew how to subdue these attachments, and make them obedient to a stronger passion, viz. for genuine piety and virtue. He wrote to Cuthbert, archbishop of Canterbury, desiring him to restrain the women of England from going in such numbers to Rome: "the greatest part of them," says he, "live in lewdness, and scandalize the Church; as there is scarcely a city in Lombardy and France, where there are not some English women of flagitious life and manners."

That association of ideas, which Mr. Locke describes, and which has been in all ages a powerful source of error and absurdity, both in principles and practice, accounts for the acrimonious expressions with which Protestant writers have too often managed themselves in the relation of matters connected with the See of Rome.—The Magdeburgensian Centurionists seem, by their treatment of the character of Boniface, to have largely imbibed this prejudice. I was surprised to find them giving sanction to the account of an old Chronicle,* which describes Boniface as raising soldiers to invade the Thuringians, absolving them from the payment of taxes to their civil governors, and justifying this extraordinary conduct by the recital of a divine vision. The manners of the eighth century certainly did not allow such an union of the military and sacerdotal character; moreover, the circumstances of Boniface's proceedings, as attested by history, and, above all, the unquestionable memorials of his evangelical labours, forbid me to entertain such sentiments of the Apostle of Germany. If he had had soldiers at his devotion, he surely might have avoided those hardships which he endured, and have prevented the murder of himself, and of his companions in the plains of Decken. The account seems to have been formed, in order to justify the conduct of military prelates, and of papal tyranny in after-ages. The censures also, which Boniface passed upon Adalbert and Clement, seem to have been arraigned by the Centurionists, without foundation. It

looks like an instance of great partiality to call such men "good persons," who were convicted of scandalous wickedness. But it would be tedious to particularize the charges which these writers have formed against Boniface, supported chiefly by mere suspicions and conjectures.

That Mosheim should inveigh against this missionary, is what might be expected from his prejudices. But he should have written with consistency. He speaks of the pious labours of Boniface, of his finishing with glory the task he had undertaken, and of the assistance which he received from a number of pious men, who repaired to him from England and France.* "His piety," he adds, "was ill rewarded by that barbarous people by whom he was murdered. If we consider the eminent services he rendered to Christianity, the honourable title of the Apostle of the Germans will appear to have been not undeservedly bestowed." Who could imagine that this pious pastor should, by the same writer, be accused, without warrant, of often "employing violence and terror, and sometimes artifice and fraud, in order to multiply the number of Christians." He ascribes to him also "an imperious and arrogant temper, and a cunning and insidious turn of mind."

Which of these two accounts shall we believe? for, it is as equally impossible that both should be true, as that piety should be consistent with a spirit of violence, arrogance, and fraud. But, it is thus, that men zealous to propagate divine truth in the earth, are often described by those, who arrogate to themselves the whole praise of judgment and candour. There has seldom existed an eminent and useful missionary, who has not, in this way, been aspersed. In the mean time, I am sensible, that the foundation of the strong prejudices against Boniface, is his attachment to the Roman See. I cannot observe, however, that he either practised idolatry, or taught false doctrine. Removed from the scene of controversy, he seems to have taken no part in the debate concerning images: he was ever invariable in opposing idolatry and immorality; he lived amidst many dangers and sufferings; and he appears to have supported, for many years, an uniform tenour of zeal, to which he sacrifi-

Character
of Boni-
face.

* Cent. viii. De propagatione Ecclesie, De Bonifacio.

* Mosheim, Cent. VIII.

fleed all worldly conveniences, and, in fine, to have finished his course in martyrdom, and in the patience and meekness of a disciple of Christ. I shall leave it to the reader's judgment, what estimate ought to be formed of him, after having observed, that God made large use of his labours by extending, in the north of Europe, the bounds of the Church, at the same time that they were so much contracted in Asia and Africa.

Winebald, the son of a royal English Saxon, shared with Boniface in his labours in Germany; his life

Winebald was preserved, though in imminent danger from idolaters, and God blessed his work among the heathen: he died in 760.

In Friesland, the Church of Utrecht was governed by Gregory, who from the fifteenth year of his age, had been a follower of Boniface. Two of his brothers having been murdered in a wood, the barons, whose vassals they were, delivered the murderers bound into his hands. Gregory, after he had treated them kindly, bad them depart in peace, saying, Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall you. He was assisted in his ministerial labours by several disciples of various nations; some were of his own nation, the French, others were English, Frisians, newly-converted Saxons, and Bavarians. Scarcely a day passed, but early in the morning he gave them spiritual instruction. This man affected no singularity either in habit or diet. That he was not carried away by the torrent of popular superstition, is a strong proof either of

Gregory of Utrecht an excellent character dies, A. D. 776. great understanding, or of eminent piety, or of both. But he recommended sobriety among his disciples: was not to be moved from the path of duty by slander, and was boundless in his liberality to the poor. He died about the year 776.

Liefuvyn, an Englishman, one of his disciples, was distinguished by his labours among the missionaries of Germany. He ventured even to appear before the assembly of the Saxons held upon the Weser; and, while they were sacrificing to their idols, he exhorted them with a loud voice to turn from those vanities to the living God. As an ambassador from Jehovah, he offered them promises of salvation. And here his zeal seemed likely to have cost him his life: but he was at length suffered to depart, on the remon-

strances* of Buto, one of their chiefs, who expostulated with them on the unreasonableness of treating an ambassador of the great God with less respect than they did one from any of the neighbouring nations.† In the mean time, the arms of Charlemagne prevailed over the Saxons, and eventually, at least, facilitated the labours of Liefuvyn, who continued to preach among this people till his death.

Villehad, an English priest, born in Northumberland, was abundantly successful in the conversion of the Saxons. It is true, that he taught under the protection and auspices of Charlemagne. But whatever may be thought of the motives of the latter, the views of the missionary might be, and probably were, upright and spiritual. Certainly he underwent great hazards,‡ overcame the ferocious spirits of the infidels by his meekness, and spread among them the knowledge of the Gospel. A persecution drove him once out of the country; but, by the power of the emperor, he again returned and prosecuted his labours. After various contests, the Saxons were obliged to submit to Charlemagne, and to become nominal Christians in general. But that this was universally the case, or even nearly so, the pious labours of a number of missionaries render very improbable.

Villehad was bishop of Bremen, and was called the Apostle of Saxony. He

* Fleury XLIV. 11.

† Buto seems, in part at least, to have felt the power of the divine word commending itself to his conscience in the sight of God; and to have reported that God was of a truth with real Christian pastors, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Effects of the kind, mentioned by the Apostle, have, in all ages, been very common, wherever the real Gospel is plainly and faithfully delivered. The message from God convicts and overawes the serious hearer, and, by its internal excellence, makes itself a way into the conscience. If Liefuvyn had preached mere morals, I should no more have expected such consequences from his harangues, than from the lectures of the Greek philosophers.

‡ Once when he was in danger of being put to death by the pagan Frisians, some of them, struck with his innocence and probity, and doubting whether the religion which he preached might not be divine, said, "Let us cast lots whether we shall put him to death, or dismiss him." It was done so, and the lot decided in his favour. Fleury, XLV. 15. The custom of deciding cases of this nature by lot, was remarkably German. The classical reader may recollect a similar instance in Cæsar's Comment. toward the end of Lib. I. De Bell. Gall.

had begun his mission in Dookum, where Boniface was murdered. He was the first missionary who passed the Elbe. His attention to the Scriptures appears from his copying the epistles of St. Paul. He died in Friesland, after he had laboured 35 years, and had been bishop of Bomen upwards of two years. To his weeping friends, he said in his dying moments, "Withhold me not from going to God: these sheep I recommend to Him, who intrusted them to me, and whose mercy is able to protect them." See *Alban Butler*, Vol. XI.

This was an age of missionaries: their character and their success form, indeed, almost the only shining picture in this century. Firmin, a Frenchman, preached the Gospel under various difficulties,* in Alsace, Bavaria, and Switzerland, and inspected a number of monasteries. After all, the arms of Charlemagne contributed more than anything else to the external reception of Christianity; and Alcuin, his favourite, laments, that more pains were taken to exact from the Saxons the payment of tithes, than to inform them of the nature of true religion. Teachers, who were merely secular, drenched in the vice of human nature and of the times, would doubtless act in this manner. But I have attempted, from very confused and imperfect memoirs, to present to the reader, those, who, in the north of Europe were indeed sent of God, and laboured in demonstration of the Spirit.

Rumold, a native either of England or of Ireland, should be added to the list. He travelled into Lower Germany, went into Brabant, diffused much light in the neighbourhood of Mechlin, and was made an itinerant episcopal missionary. In 775, he was murdered by two persons, one of whom he had reproved for adultery.†

Sylvin, of Auchy, born in Toulouse, was first a courtier, then a religious person, and afterwards appointed bishop among the infidels. His labours were, chiefly, in Transjanne, the north of France, which was, in this century, full of pagans and merely nominal Christians. He ga-

thered in a large harvest, having preached for many years. He died at Auchy, in the country of Artois.

Virgilius, an Irishman, was appointed bishop of Salzburg, by king Pepin. During two years, his modesty prevented him from entering upon the office; but he was at length prevailed upon to receive consecration. He followed the steps of Boniface in rooting out the remains of idolatry in his diocese, and died in the year 780.*

Virgilius dies,
A. D. 780.

CHAPTER V.

AUTHORS OF THIS CENTURY.

THE most learned writer of this century, if we may except our countryman Bede, seems to have been John of Damascus. He was one of the first, who mingled the Aristotelian or Peripatetic philosophy with the Christian religion.† This philosophy was gradually supplanting the authority of the Platonie. It makes no part of my subject, to explain the difference of the systems of Plato and Aristotle. Suffice it to say, that they were both very foreign to Christianity,

* A misunderstanding had once taken place between this ecclesiastic and Boniface. The latter assigned him to the See of Rome, of teaching "that there was another world, and other men under the earth, or another sun and moon." Basil. Ep. 10. To the pious spirit of Boniface a difficulty of solving this question arose, on this view of the tenets of Virgilius how such ideas were compatible with the Mosiac account of the origin of all mankind from Adam, and of the redemption of the whole species by Jesus Christ. After all, it appears that Boniface was mistaken, and that Virgilius being better acquainted with the true figure of the earth, than most of his contemporaries in that ignorant age, only held the opinion of the Antipodes, a notion so mixed in philosophy, as it is innocent in regard to Christianity. As Virgilius was afterwards made bishop of Salzburg, he continued to labour in the same cause with Boniface, and to tread in his steps. It is more than probable, that both Boniface and the pope were satisfied of his soundness in the facts, and dismissed the accusation. It seemed worth while to state this matter in a true light, from the evidence of Boniface's letter. It appears, that Virgilius was not condemned for holding the doctrine of the Antipodes, and that the charge of Beder against Boniface, is so malicious as it is ill founded. See Hist. of the Popes (Zachary) — where the historian, without warrant, accuses Boniface of bearing a secret grudge to Virgilius, and of being actuated by a spirit of revenge.

† *Fleur. XII. 44.*

* Mosh, cent. VIII.

† A. Butler, Vol. VII.

† See *Alban Butler's Lives of Saints.*

and each, in their turn, corrupted it extremely. John was a voluminous writer, and became, among the Greeks, what Thomas Aquinas afterwards was among the Latins. He seems to have defended the system, commonly called the Arminian notion of free-will, in opposition to the doctrine of effectual grace. This* was a natural consequence of his philosophizing spirit. For, all the philosophers of antiquity, amidst their endless discordances, agreed in teaching man to rely altogether on himself. This is the dangerous philosophy, which St. Paul warns us to beware of. It hitherto wore, chiefly, the garb of Plato: it was now assuming that of Aristotle. In both these dresses, it was still "the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God." And even at this day, among all who lean to their own understanding, to the disparagement of revelation, its nature is the same, however varnished with the polish of Christian phraseology.

In the doctrine of the Trinity, John appears to have been orthodox: in other respects, he was one of the most powerful supporters of error. He was an advocate for the practice of praying for the dead, which he regarded as effectual for the remission of sins. This was a deplorable article of superstition, which had been growing in the Church, and wanted the sanction of a genius like that of John to give it lasting celebrity. I can find no evidences of his real knowledge or practice of godliness. And the reader will think he has been detained sufficiently by this Grecian author, after he has learned, that his eloquent and learned pen defended the detestable doctrine of image-worship, and contributed more than that of any other author, to establish the practice of it in the east. In the mean time there arose an evangelical luminary, who might combat his arguments with sufficient ability. The Scripture itself, indeed, was more than half buried under the load of superstitions. The learning of this eastern father, was probably more accurate and refined than that of Bede. In the latter, however, we have seen the fullest evidence of Christian light and humility: in the former, as far as respects true wisdom, all is dark and dreary; and the baleful influence of his unscriptural opinions, however respectable he might be in a literary view, has seldom been ex-

ceeded by that of any other writer in the history of the church.

I have already taken notice of the opposition made in the west, to the progress of image-worship, by the authority of Charlemagne. The Carolin books, published in his name, were powerful checks against the growing evil; and it is more probable, that such a prince as Charlemagne was carried along by the current of the times, than that he directed the sentiments of the western Churches by his own theological studies. Political and secular reasons unhappily retained these Churches in the Roman communion, and, in process of time, the abominations of idolatry overspread them all. It is, however, a pleasing circumstance, that the labours of missionaries in the north of Europe, which form the most shining part of Christian history in this century, were all conducted by Christians of the west, and particularly by those who were the most remote from idolatry, those of our own country especially. There is, therefore, good reason to believe, that the new Churches in the north were taught to worship the living God, through the one Mediator Christ. For the British Churches expressed the most marked detestation of the second council of Nice.* And Alcuin, the preceptor of Charlemagne, disproved its decrees in a letter, by express authorities of Scripture. It is too true, that our ancestors, like the rest of Europe, learned at length to worship idols. For religious movements among churches are generally retrograde. Entirely distinct from human institutions of science, Christian views are most perfect at first, as being derived from the divine word, and impressed on the hearts of men by divine grace: the wisdom of this world, aided by the natural propensities of mankind, corrupts them afterwards by degrees, and too often leaves them at length, neither root nor branch of evangelical light and purity.

Alcuin, who has been just mentioned, was born in England;† and was a deacon of the Church of York. He was sent ambassador to France by Offa, king of the Mercians, in the year 790. On this occasion he gained the esteem of Charlemagne, and persuaded that monarch to found the universities of Paris and Pavia. He was

Alcuin, an Englishman, goes as ambassador to France, A. D. 790

* Du Pin, 8th cent. John of Damascus.

* Collier's Ecc. Hist. B. 2.

† Du Pin.

looked upon as one of the wisest and most learned men of his time. He read public lectures in the emperor's palace, and in other places. He wrote, in an orthodox manner, on the Trinity, and, in particular, confuted the notions of Felix, bishop of Urgel, of whom it is sufficient to say, that he revived something like the Nestorian heresy, by separating the humanity from the divinity of the Son of God. Alcin showed himself a master

of his subject, and wrote in a candid and moderate spirit. A. D. 804. He died in 804.

Even Italy itself was not disposed altogether to obey the pope, in regard to image-worship. Some Italian bishops assisted at the council of Frankfort, before mentioned; and Paulinus, of Aquileia, bore a distinguished part in it. This prelate wrote, also, against the error of Felix, and seems to have been one of the best bishops of his time. Let us try, from the scanty materials before us, if we can collect his views and spirit on subjects peculiarly Christian.

This bishop successfully opposed the error of Felix, concerning the person of Jesus Christ, and wrote a book of wholesome instructions, which for a long time

Firmness of Paulinus at the Second Council of Nice.

was supposed to be the work of Augustine.* It is remarkable, that he and some other Italian bishops, in the year 787,† agreed to condemn the decrees of the second council of Nice, as idolatrous, though

pope Adrian had assisted at that council by his legate, and used his utmost endeavours to maintain its authority. In the council of Frankfort also, the presence of two papal legates hindered not the firm agreement of Paulinus and other Italian bishops, with the decrees of the said council. These are clear proofs, that the despotism of Antichrist was, as yet, so far from being universal, that it was not owned throughout Italy itself; and, that in some parts of that country, as well as in England and France, the purity of Christian worship was still maintained. The city of Rome, indeed, and its environs, seem to have been, at this period, the most corrupt part of Christendom in Europe, nor do I remember a single missionary in these times to have been an Italian.

Paulinus, in his book against Felix, affirms that the Eucharist is a morsel and bit of bread.* He maintains, that it is spiritual life or death in the eater, as he either hath faith or hath not; which seems to be a just and evangelical view of that divine ordinance, not only free from the absurdity of transubstantiation, but also expressive of the Christian article of justification, of which the reader hears very little in these cloudy times. Still more express testimonies to the essentials of salvation are not wanting in this author. He protests that the blood of those, who have themselves been redeemed, cannot blot out the least sin; that the expiation of iniquity is the exclusive privilege of the blood of Christ alone. He† defines the properties of the divine and human nature, as united in the person of Jesus Christ, with great precision; and so careful is he to describe the latter as circumscribed and limited by the bounds of body, as to form, at least, a strong consequential argument against the notion of transubstantiation. Hear how he comments on our Lord's well-known description of eating his flesh and drinking his blood in the 6th chap. of St. John's Gospel. "The flesh and blood is to be referred to his human, not to his divine nature.—Yet, if he were not the true God, his flesh and blood could by no means give eternal life to those who feed upon him. Whence also John says, the blood of his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Hear also how he speaks of the intercession of Christ. "Paul is not a mediator; he is an ambassador for Christ. The advocate is He, who being also the Redeemer, exhibits to God the Father the human nature in the unity of the person of God and man. John intercedes not, but declares that this mediator is the propitiation for our sins." Once more: "The Son of God Almighty, our Almighty Lord, because He redeemed us with the price of his blood, is justly called the true Redeemer, by the confession of all who are redeemed. He himself was not redeemed; He had never been captive: we have been redeemed, because we were captives, sold under sin; bound by the hand-writing which was against us, which he took away, nailing it to his cross, blotting it out by his blood, tri-

* De Pin.

† See Dr. Allix, on the ancient Churches of Piedmont.

* Bucerella et particula panis, in his dedication to Charlemagne.

† Allix.

: Rom. vii.

umpling openly over it in himself, having finished a work, which the blood of no other Redeemer could do."• Such is the language of this evangelical bishop, while he is opposing the Nestorian heresy revived by Felix. And here, at least, we see a due respect paid to Holy Scripture. Paulinus quotes, understands, and builds his faith upon it; and is equally remote from dependence on mere human reasonings, on the authority of the Church of Rome, or on any traditions.

This bishop was born about the year 726, near Friuli, was promoted to Aquileia in 776, was highly favoured by Charlemagne, and preached the Gospel to the pagans of Carinthia and Styria, and to the Avaras, a nation of Huns.

Brief account of Paulinus.

• Coloss. ii.

One of his maxims was, "Pride is that, without which no sin is or will be committed: it is the beginning, the end, and the cause of all sin."⁶ I wonder not, that he, who in an age of dulness could see the nature of sin with so penetrating an eye was confounded with the bishop of Hippo. He died in 804.* He dies, in a letter to Charlemagne, A. D. 804. he complained of the want of residence in bishops, and of their attending the court. He cites a canon of the council of Sardica, in the fourth century, which forbade the absence of bishops from their dioceses, for a longer space than three weeks.

* I have been obliged to Alban Butler for some of the foregoing particulars. But it is remarkable that he omits his testimony against image-worship. The reader should remember that Butler is a zealous Roman Catholic.

CENTURY IX.

CHAPTER I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE STATE OF RELIGION IN THIS CENTURY.

WE are penetrating into the regions of darkness, and a "land of deserts and pits, a land of drought, and of the shadow of death;"* and are carried, by every step, into scenes still more gloomy than the former. Here and there, indeed, a glimmering ray of the Sun of Righteousness appears; but it is in vain to look for any steady lustre of evangelical truth and holiness. In such a situation, to pursue the chronological course of events, would be as tedious as it is unprofitable. The plan of history for each century should be modified by the existing circumstances. And there seem to be four distinct phenomena of Christian light in this period, which deserve to be illustrated in so many chapters; namely, in the 3d, 3d, 4th, and 5th.—It shall be the business of this first chapter, to premise some general observations, which may enable the reader more clearly to understand those phenomena.

Several circumstances attended the thick darkness which pervaded this century; and they appear to be reducible to the following heads:—the preference given to human writings above the Scriptures,—the domination of the popedom,—the accumulation of ceremonies,—and the oppression of the godly.†

It was now fashionable to explain Scripture entirely by the writings of the fathers. No man was permitted, with impunity, to vary in the least from their decisions. The great apostolical rule of interpretation, namely, to compare spiritual things with spiritual,‡ was in a manner lost. It was deemed sufficient that such a renowned doctor had given such an interpretation. Hence, men of learning and industry paid more attention

to the fathers, than to the sacred volume, which, through long disuse and neglect, was looked on as obscure and perplexed, and quite unfit for popular reading. Even divine truths seemed to derive their authority more from the word of man than of God; and the writings and decrees of men were no longer treated as witnesses, but usurped the office of judges of divine truth.

The popedom also grew stronger and stronger. Ignorance and superstition were so predominant, that whoever dared to oppose the bishop of Rome, drew upon himself a host of enemies. All, who looked for advancement in the Church, attached themselves to Antichrist. It is in this way only, that I can account for the very little resistance made to image-worship. We have seen, how a large part of the West rejected it. But most persons contented themselves with a simple exposition of their creed. Idolatry, in the mean time, was practically supported by the whole power and influence of the popedom.

The great accumulation of ceremonies, the observance of which was looked upon as absolutely necessary to salvation, drew off the attention of men from Christian piety. The all-important article of justification was nearly smothered in the rubbish: and pastors were so much taken up with externals, that they were almost entirely diverted from intellectual improvement.

Men of eminence, both in church and state, partly through superstition, and partly through secular views, suppressed in the best every attempt to inform mankind. There were, however, a few, who groaned under these evils, and worshipped God in spirit and truth.

In Asia, Mahometanism still reigned; and, the case of the Pantheonians excepted,* scarcely a vestige of real godliness appeared in the Eastern Church, though we ought not to doubt but the Lord had his secret ones. Image-worship was still a subject of debate; but, at length, under the superstitious empress Theodora,

* Jerem. ix. 6.

† Centuriat. See their preface to the 9th century. I have availed myself of some of the thoughts; the whole is ingenious and spirited.

‡ 1 Cor. ii.

• See Chap. II.

it effectually triumphed in the East. There was not an emperor or bishop of Constantinople, in all this period, who seems to have deserved particular notice on account of vital Christian knowledge, or practical piety.* The same judgment may be formed of the Roman popes. In

Tenets of
transub-
stantia-
tion.

this dark season, Pascasius Radbert introduced the absurd tenet of transubstantiation, which was opposed by John Scotus Erigena, and Rabanus, archbishop of Mentz, two of the most learned men of that age. But their learning seems to have had little connexion with godliness, however they might successfully plead the cause of common sense in the controversy just mentioned. For, they joined in opposing the doctrine of grace, concerning which a controversy of some importance was raised in this century.†

In France, the views of divine grace, revived by Augustine, were more and more darkened; and we shall presently find, that a zealous advocate for them could not be heard with candour. Ado, archbishop of Vienne, was, however, an eminent exception to this account. He was indefatigable in pressing the great truths of salvation. He usually began his sermons with these, or the like words: "Hear the eternal truth, which speaks to you in the Gospel;" or, "Hear Jesus Christ, who saith to you." He took particular care of the examination of candidates for orders; and was a very diligent disciplinarian. He permitted none, who were ignorant of Christian principles, to be sponsors to the baptized, or to be joined in matrimony, or to be admitted to the Lord's Supper, till they were better instructed. He was inflexibly vigilant against vice; and, while his own example was an honour to his profession, he enjoined his clergy to apprise him, if they should discover any slip in his conduct. Nor did king Lothaire find him obsequious to his lusts; for through Ado's vigorous remonstrances, he was obliged to desist from a design of divorcing his queen. He sympathized, however, with sincere penitents, and was a real friend

to the poor, both in a spiritual and temporal sense; and was the founder of many hospitals for their reception.*

In England, the decline of godliness was grievous,† and as† Huntingdon remarks, Divine Providence punished the Saxons by the invasion of the Danes, the most lawless and the most savage of all mortals. The great Alfred was indeed raised up to defend his country against them. And, one of his speeches, delivered to the soldiers, before a battle, displays, at once, much good sense and a spirit of religion. He told his people, that their sins had given their enemies the advantage: that they ought to reform their own manners, in order to engage the favour of God on their side; that in other respects they had the superiority, Christians were fighting against heathens, and honest men against robbers; that theirs was not a war of ambition or conquest, but of necessary self-defence. In the battle which followed, he entirely defeated the Danes.

In§ the preface to Gregory's Pastoral, a book translated into English, by this prince, for the benefit of his subjects, he observes, that when he came to the Crown, there were very few, south of the Humber,|| who understood the common prayers in English, or, who could translate a passage of Latin into the language of their own country. He sent copies of Gregory's Pastoral into every diocese, for the benefit of the clergy: with the same beneficent design, he translated also Bede's ecclesiastical history: he himself constantly attended public worship; and, from his youth, he was wont to pray for grace, and to use serious methods to subdue his passions. Through life he appears to have main-

* Alban Butler, XII.

† There is reason, however, to believe, that a devotional and, probably, an evangelical spirit prevailed in some parts of the British isles. For monks, in Ireland and Scotland, who gave themselves to prayer, preaching, and teaching in the middle ages, were called Culdees, that is, Cultores Dei. They were first known in this century by that name at St. Andrew's particularly; but were never settled in England, except at St. Peter's in York. A. Butler, Vol. V.

‡ Collier's Ecc. Hist.

§ Alfred invited John Scotus, not the famous John Scotus Erigena, from Old Saxony into England; and founded the University of Oxford. That of Cambridge was of a date somewhat later.

|| Collier, Vol. I. B. 3d.

* I say vital; for I am aware that Photius, bishop of Constantinople, flourished in this century; a person equally infamous for hypocrisy and ambition, and renowned for genius and ecclesiastical learning. What melancholly instances of contradiction does the history of mankind afford! † See Chap. IV.

tained a beautiful consistency of character. He endeavoured to promote the knowledge of the English tongue among all persons of tolerable rank; and expressed his opinion, that those, who meant to attain eminence in the state, should also know the Latin language. It is pleasant to see the ebullitions of genius and of strong sense in an iron age, like this before us. Alfred would, doubtless, in more auspicious times, have appeared among the first of mankind. There seems no reason to doubt the sincerity of his piety. A religious spirit had this advantage in a rude age, that it was not thought to reflect disgrace on the powers of the understanding. But, this glorious sun, after it had shone a little time through an atmosphere enveloped with vapours, and had in some degree dispersed them, was not able to illumine the region in which it appeared: The mist prevailed again, and England was covered with darkness.

It may be proper to remind the reader, that about the beginning of this century,

Egbert
became king of all Eng-
land,
A. D. 827.
Egbert became king of Wes-
sex: that in 827, he became
king of all England, near 400
years after the first arrival of
the Saxons; and that Alfred
was his grandson.

Charlemagne of France, who had flourished in the last century, died in the former part of this, aged 72, in the year 814. It is scarcely worth

Death of
Charle-
magne,
A. D. 814.
while to recount the splen-
dours of this emperor, since his
imaginary ambition and his
habitual hardness, too plainly

evinced his want of Christian principle. He revived the western empire in Germany, which continues to this day. He was a great instrument of Providence, no doubt, in extending the pale of the Church; and, at the same time, he fixed the power of the popedom on the strongest foundations. His labours to revive learning were very great; but, like those of Alfred, they failed of success. His religious and moral character bears no comparison with that of the English monarch.

CHAPTER II.

THE PAULICIANS.

ABOUT the year 660, a new sect arose in the East, the accounts of which are far more scanty than a writer of real

Church-history would wish.*

Constantine, a person who dwelt in Mananalis, an obscure town in the neighbourhood of Samosata, entertained a deacon, who having been a prisoner among the Mahometans, had returned from captivity, and received from the same deacon, the gift of the New Testament in the original language. So early had the laity begun to think themselves excluded from the reading of the sacred volume; and the clergy, both in the East and the West, encouraged this apprehension. The growing ignorance rendered by far the greatest part of the laity incapable of reading the Scriptures. I do not find any ecclesiastical prohibitory decrees in these times, nor was there much occasion for it. But Constantine made the best use of the deacon's present. He studied the sacred oracles, and exercised his own understanding upon them. He formed to himself a plan of divinity from the New Testament; and, as St. Paul is the most systematical of all the Apostles, Constantine very properly attached himself to his writings with peculiar attention, as indeed every serious theologian must do. He will find, no doubt, the same truths interspersed through the rest of the sacred volume, and a wonderful unity of design and spirit breathing through the whole; but, as it pleased God to employ one person more learned than the rest, it is highly proper, that the student should avail himself of this advantage. That Constantine was in possession of the genuine text, was acknowledged universally. A remarkable circumstance! which shows the watchful providence of God over the Scriptures!—Amidst a thousand frauds and sophisms of the times, no adulteration of them was ever permitted to take place.

The enemies of the Paulicians give them the name from some unknown

* Photius, B. I. contra Manichæos, et Peter Siculus Hist. Manichæorum. These are the two original sources, from which Mosheim and Gibbon have drawn their information concerning the Paulicians. Photius and Peter have not fallen into my hands; and their prejudice and passion were so great, that my reader will very probably be no great loser by the circumstance. By the assistance of the two modern authors, I shall state the few facts which are known, and give as impartial a judgment concerning the sects in question as I can. The conduct of Gibbon is remarkable in this part of his history. O vi viri omnia!—Mosheim Eccl. Hist. IX. Cent.—Gibbon, Vol. V. C. 34.

Sect of
Pauli-
cians,
A. D. 660.

teacher ; but there seems scarcely a doubt, that they took the name from St. Paul himself. For Constantine gave himself the name of Sylvanus ; his disciples were called, Titus, Timothy, Tychicus, the names of the Apostle's fellow-labourers ; and the names of the Apostolic Churches were given to the congregations formed by their labours in Armenia and Cappadocia.—Their enemies called them Gnostics or Manichees ; and confounded them with those ancient sectaries, of whom it is probable that there were then scarcely any remains. It has been too customary to connect different and independent sects into one ; and to suppose, that every new phenomenon in religion is nothing more than the revival of some former party. This is frequently the case, but not always. In the present instance, I see reason to suppose the Paulicians to have been perfect originals, in regard to any other denomination of Christians. The little, that has already been mentioned concerning them, carries entirely this appearance ; and, I hope, it may shortly be evident, that they originated from a heavenly influence, teaching and converting them ; and that, in them, we have one of those extraordinary effusions of the Divine Spirit, by which the knowledge of Christ and the practice of godliness is kept alive in the world.

The Paulicians are said to have rejected the two epistles of St. Peter. We know nothing of these men, but from the pens of their enemies. Their writings, and the lives of their eminent teachers, are totally lost. In this case, common justice requires us to suspend our belief ; and, if internal evidence militate in their favour, a strong presumption is formed against the credibility of a report, raised to their disadvantage. This is the case in the present instance : for, there is nothing in St. Peter's writings that could naturally prejudice against those writings, persons who cordially received the epistles of St. Paul. There is, on the other hand, the most perfect coincidence of sentiment and spirit between the two Apostles ; and, in the latter epistle of St. Peter, toward the end, there is a very remarkable testimony to the inspired character and divine wisdom of St. Paul. That this sect also despised the whole of the Old Testament, is asserted, but on grounds, which seem utterly unwarrantable. For, they are said to have done this as Gnostics and Manichees, though they steadily condemned

the Manichees, and complained of the injustice which branded them with that odious name. They are also charged with holding the eternity of matter, and the existence of two independent principles ; and with denying the real sufferings and real flesh of Christ. It seems no way was found so convenient to disgrace them as by the charge of Manicheism. But I cannot believe that they held these tenets ; not only because they themselves denied the charge, but also because they unquestionably held things perfectly inconsistent with such notions. Is it possible, that rational creatures, men endued with common understanding, could agree to reverse the writings of St. Paul, and to consider them as divinely inspired, and at the same time to condemn those of the Old Testament ?

The pious, intelligent, reader, who is moderately versed in Scripture, does not need to be told, that the Apostle is continually quoting the Old Testament, expounding and illustrating, and building his doctrines upon it : in short, that the New Testament is so indissolubly connected with the Old, that he, who despises the latter, cannot really, whatever he may pretend, respect the former as divine ; and that this observation holds good in regard to all the writers of the New Testament, and to St. Paul more particularly. It is allowed also, that the Paulicians held the common orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, with the confession and use of which the whole apparatus of the Manichean fable seems incompatible. Let the reader reflect only on the light in which Manicheism appeared to Augustine of Hippo, after he became acquainted with St. Paul, and he will probably form a just estimate of this whole subject.

This people also were perfectly free from the image-worship, which more and more pervaded the East. They were simply scriptural in the use of the sacraments : they disregarded relics, and all the fashionable equipage of superstition ; they knew no other Mediator but the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sylvanus preached with great success. Pontus and Cappadocia, regions once renowned for Christian piety, were again enlightened through his labours. He and his associates were distinguished from the clergy of that day, by their scriptural names, modest titles, zeal, knowledge, activity and holiness. Their congregations were diffused over the provinces of

Asia Minor: six of the principal churches were called by the names of those to whom St. Paul addressed his epistles; and Sylvanus resided in the neighbourhood of Colonia in Pontus. Roused by the growing importance of the sect, the Greek emperors began to persecute the Paulicians with the most sanguinary severity; and, under Christian forms and names, they reacted the scenes of Galerius and Maximin. "To their other excellent deeds," says the bigoted Peter, the Sicilian, "the divine and orthodox emperors added this virtue, that they ordered the Montanists and Manicheans* to be capitally punished; and their books, wherever found, to be committed to the flames: also, that if any person was found to have secreted them, he was to be put to death, and his goods to be confiscated." False religion, in all ages, hates the light, and supports herself by persecution, not by instruction; while the real truth as it is in Jesus always comes to the light of Scripture, and exhibits that light plainly to the world by reading and expounding the sacred volume, whence alone she derives her authority.

A Greek officer, named Simeon, armed with imperial authority, came to Colonia and apprehended Sylvanus and a number

Paulicians
persecuted.

of his disciples. Stones were put into the hands of these last, and they were required to kill their pastor, as the

price of their forgiveness. A person named Justin, was the only one of the number who obeyed; and he stoned to death the father of the Paulicians, who had laboured twenty-seven years. Justin signalized himself still more by betraying his brethren; while Simeon, struck, no doubt, with the evidences of divine grace apparent in the sufferers, embraced, at length, the faith which he came to destroy, gave up the world, preached the Gospel, and died a martyr. For a hundred and fifty years these servants of Christ underwent the horrors of persecution, with Christian patience and meekness; and if the acts of their martyrdom, their preaching, and their lives, were distinctly recorded, there seems no doubt, but this people would appear to

have resembled those, whom the Church justly reveres as having suffered in the behalf of Christ during the three first centuries. During all this time the power of the Spirit of God was with them; and they practised the precepts of the 13th chapter to the Romans, as well as believed and felt the precious truths contained in the doctrinal chapters of the same epistle. The blood of the martyrs was, in this case, as formerly, the seed of the Church: a succession of teachers and congregations arose, and a person named Sergius, who laboured among them thirty-three years, is confessed by the bigoted historians to have been a man of extraordinary virtue. The persecution had, however, some intermissions, till at length, Theodora, the same Empress, who fully established image-worship, exerted herself beyond any of her predecessors against them. Her inquisitors ransacked the lesser Asia, in search of these sectaries; and she is computed to have killed by the gibbet, by fire, and by sword, a hundred thousand persons.

We have brought down the scanty history of this people to about the year 845. To undergo a constant scene of persecution with Christian meekness, and to render both to God and to Caesar their dues all the time, at once require and evidence the strength of real grace. Of this the Paulicians seem to have been possessed till the period just mentioned. They remembered the injunction of Rev. xiii. 10: "He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword: here is the faith and patience of the Saints." Let Christians believe, rejoice in God, patiently suffer, return good for evil, and still obey those whom God hath set over them. These weapons have ever been found too hard for Satan: the Church has grown exceedingly, wherever they were faithfully handled; and the power of the Gospel has prevailed. This was the case very eminently with the Church, in the era of Dioclesian's persecution. She not only outlived the storm, but also, under the conduct of Providence, became externally as well as internally, superior to her enemies. If the Paulicians had continued to act thus, similar

Theodora, during the minority of her son Michael III. ruled as Empress, and fully established image-worship.

Such is the history of the Paulicians to

A. D. 845.

* Such, I suppose, were the opprobrious names given to the Paulicians. The real Montanists had originated in the second century, and had probably now no existence. We see here a further proof of the vague and delusory modes of eradicating the Paulicians.

Declension of the Paulicians
A. D. 845.
consequences might have been rationally expected. But faith and patience failed at length. We are ignorant of the steps by which they were gradually betrayed into a secular spirit. About the year 845, they murdered two persecutors, a governor and a bishop: and a soldier called Carbeas, who commanded the guards in the imperial armies, that he might revenge his father's death, who had been slain by the inquisitors, formed a band of Paulicians, who renounced their allegiance to the emperor, negotiated with the Mahometan powers, and, by their assistance, endeavoured to establish the independency of their sect.

Theodora was succeeded by her son Michael.* Her cruelties and superstitions deserved the applause of Nicolas, who became pope of Rome in 858. In a letter he highly approved her conduct, and admired her on account of her implicit obedience to the Holy See. We learn from the biographer of the emperor Michael what Theodora had done to call forth the encomiums of this pontiff. "She resolved," says he, "to bring the Paulicians to the true faith, or cut them all off root and branch."—A resolution worthy of a truly Catholic princess!—"Pursuant to that resolution, she sent some noblemen and magistrates," not preachers or missionaries,— "into the different provinces of the empire; and by them some of those unhappy wretches were crucified, some put to the sword, and some thrown into the sea and drowned." Thus were they slaughtered to the number of one hundred thousand, and their goods and estates confiscated.†

The pope alluded to this bloody massacre, when he commends Theodora in the same letter for the manly vigour she exerted, the Lord co-operating,‡ as he blasphemously adds, against obstinate and incorrigible heretics. Nicolas at the same time observes, that the heretics experiencing in her all the resolution and vigour of a man, could scarcely believe her to be a woman. Indeed zeal for religion had changed in Theodora, as it did in our Queen Mary, the tender and compassionate heart

of a woman into that of a merciless and blood-thirsty tyrant. And here I am not disposed to suppress, that from the pope's own words, it appears, that the Apostolic See had its share in the glorious exploit just mentioned; for the pope, after telling her that the heretics dreaded, and at the same time admired, her resolution and steadiness in maintaining the purity of the Catholic faith adds, "*and why so, but because you followed the directions of the Apostolic See?*"

So truly was Antichristian tyranny now established at Rome!!

Michael, the son of Theodora, fled before the arms of Carbeas; whose successor Chrysocheir, in conjunction with the Mahometans, penetrated into the heart of Asia, and desolated the fairest provinces of the Greeks. In the issue, however, Chrysocheir was slain, the Paulician fortress Tephric was reduced, and the power of the rebels was broken, though a number of them in the mountains, by the assistance of the Arabs, preserved an uncomfortable independence. The ferocious actions of the LATER Paulicians show, that they had lost the spirit of true religion: their schemes of worldly ambition were likewise frustrated. And similar consequences, in more recent ages, may be found to have resulted from political methods of supporting the Gospel.

A number of this sect, about the middle of the eighth century, had been transplanted into Thrace, and subsisted there for ages, sometimes tolerated, at other times persecuted, by the reigning powers. Even to the end of the seventeenth century they still existed about the valleys of Mount Hemus. Of their religious history, during this period, I can find nothing: and, in our days, they seem to have nothing more of the Paulician sect than the name. I cannot follow the learned author, to whom I owe much for this account,† in his conjectures concerning this people's dispersion through the European provinces. Nor does there seem any good evidence of the Waldenses owing their origin to the Paulicians. Such speculations are too doubtful to satisfy the minds of those who prefer the solid evidence of facts to the conjectural ebullitions of a warm imagination.

On the whole, we have seen, in general, satisfactory proof of the work of divine

* This is Michael III. and is surnamed the Stot, or the Drunkard. He was the son of the emperor Theophilus, and came to the throne A. D. 842, under the tuition and regency of his mother Theodora.

† Porphyrog. ‡ Domino cooperante.

* Conoil. Lab. Nic. Ep. xiv.

† Gibbon.

grace in Asia Minor, commencing in the latter end of the seventh century, and extended to the former part of the ninth century. But, where secular politics begin, there the life and simplicity of vital godliness end. When the Paulicians began to rebel against the established government; to return evil for evil; to MINGLE AMONG THE HEATHEN,* the Mohammedans; and to defend their own religion by arms, negotiations, and alliances, they ceased to become the LIGHT OF THE WORLD, and the salt of the earth. Such they had been for more than a hundred and eighty years, adorning and exemplifying the real Gospel, by a life of faith, hope, and charity, and by the preservation of the truth in a patient course of suffering, looking for true riches and honour in the world to come; and, no doubt, they are not frustrated of their hope. But, when secular maxims began to prevail among them, they shone, for a time, as heroes and patriots, in the false glow of human praise; but they lost the sanctity of true honour, as all have done in all ages, who have descended from the grandeur of the passive spirit of conformity to Christ, and have preferred to that spirit the low ambition of earthly greatness.

CHAPTER III.

THE OPPOSITION MADE TO THE CORRUPTIONS OF POPERY IN THIS CENTURY, PARTICULARLY BY CLAUDIUS BISHOP OF TURIN.

We have seen the light of divine truth shedding its kindly influence in the East; let us now behold the reviving power of

its beams in the West. We must not expect to observe it generally illuminating either of those two great divisions of the Christian world, but only shining in some particular districts. The absolute power of the pope, the worship of images, and the invocation of Saints and Angels, were opposed, as in the last century, by several princes and ecclesiastics. A council at Paris, ^{Council at Paris,} held in the year 824, agreed with the council of Frankfort ^{A. D. 824.} in the rejection of the decrees of the second council of Nice, and in the prohibition of image-worship. Agobard, archbishop of Lyons, wrote a book against the abuse of pictures and images; in which he maintained, that we ought not to worship any image of God, except that which is God himself, his eternal Son; and, that there is no other Mediator between God and man, except Jesus Christ, both God and man. I have already observed, that the novel notion of transubstantiation was vigorously opposed by Rabanus and Scotus Erigena, the two most learned men of the West, in this century; nor was that doctrine, as yet, established in the kingdom of Antichrist. Rabanus treats it as an upstart opinion; it may be proper to add, that Bertram, a monk of Corbie, being asked whether the same body, which was crucified, was received in the mouth of the faithful, in the sacrament, answered, that "the difference is as great as between the pledge, and the thing for which the pledge is delivered: as great as between the representation and the reality." No Protestant, at this day, could speak more explicitly the sense of the Primitive Church. In Italy itself, Angilbertus, bishop of Milan, refused to own the pope's supremacy, nor did the church of Milan submit to the Roman See till two hundred years afterwards.*

But these are only distant and remote evidences, that God had not forsaken his Church in Europe. There want not, however, more evident demonstrations of the same thing in the life and writings of Claudius, bishop of Turin, a character worthy to be held in high estimation by

* Psalm cvi. ver. 35.
* Natalis Alexander, a voluminous French historian, and more vehemently attached to the papacy than Passheverus commonly are, complies the Paulicians and also Claudius of Turin, of whom the reader will hear in the next Chapter, with Wicliffites, Lutharians, and Calvinists. He brands them as enemies to the salvation of the Cross of Christ, which, he says, the true Church always adored, "not only the genuine Cross, but an effigy of it, as soon as the Church obtained liberty under Christian princes." Tom. V. p. 636—638. This deserves to be considered as the testimony of a learned adversary to the evangelical character of the Paulicians, and of Claudius of Turin.

* I have thus far, in this chapter, availed myself of the labours of Bishop Newton on the Prophecies, 3d Vol. 151, &c. In the sequel of the chapter, I make use of the remarks of Alrix on the Churches of Piedmont, of the Conventuals, and of Fleury, though a Roman Catholic.

all, who fear God: but so little justice, in our times, is done to godliness, that while the names of statesmen, heroes, and philosophers are in every one's mouth, the name of this great reformer, has, probably, been not so much as heard of, by the generality of my readers. To me he seems to stand the first in the order of time among the Reformers. Let us collect the little information which we have been able to obtain concerning him.

Claudius was born in Spain. In his early years he was a chaplain in the court of Lewis the meek: he was reputed to have great knowledge in the Scriptures;* insomuch that Lewis perceiving the ignorance of a great part of Italy, in regard to the doctrines of the Gospel, says Fleury, and willing to provide the churches of Piedmont with one, who might stem the growing torrent of image-worship, promoted Claudius to the See of Turin, about the year 817. Claudius answered the expectations of the emperor: by his writings, he copiously expounded the Scrip-

Claudius made bishop of Turin, A. D. 817. tures: by his preaching, he laboriously instructed the people: "in truth," says Fleury, "he began to preach and instruct with great application." The calumnies, with which his principles were aspersed, are abundantly confuted by his commentaries on various parts of the Old and New Testament, still extant in manuscripts, in various French libraries. A comment on the Epistle to the Galatians, is his only work which was committed to the press. In it he every where asserts the equality of all the Apostles with St. Peter. And, indeed, he always declares Jesus Christ to be the only proper head of the Church. He is severe against the doctrine of human merits, and of the exaltation of traditions to a height of credibility equal to that of the Divine Word. He maintains that we are to be saved by faith only; holds the fallibility of the Church, exposes the futility of praying for the dead, and the sinfulness of the idolatrous practices then supported by the Roman See. Such are the sentiments found in his commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians.

In his commentary on St. Matthew, be-

sides an explication of the Sacrament, very different from that of Paschasius, who defended transubstantiation, about sixteen years after, we meet with some pious sentiments worth transcribing. The words, "I will no more drink of the fruit of the vine, till that day that I drink it now with you in my Father's kingdom," he paraphrases thus: "no longer will I delight in the carnal ceremonies of the synagogue, among which the Paschal Lamb was most distinguished; for the time of my resurrection is at hand; that day will come, when, placed in the kingdom of God, exalted to the glory of immortal life, I shall be filled with a new joy, together with you, on account of the salvation of the people born again from the fountain of the same spiritual grace. What else does he mean by new wine, but the immortality of renewed bodies? By saying 'with you,' he promises them the resurrection of their bodies, that they might put on immortality. The expression 'with you,' must not be referred to the same time, but to the same event of the renewal of the body. The Apostle declares that we are risen with Christ, that by the expectation of the future he might bring present joy."

In the end of his commentary on Leviticus, dedicated to the Abbot Theodemir, he writes some things, which may exhibit and illustrate his cares and labours in the support of real godliness.

"The beauty of the Eternal Truth and Wisdom doth not exclude those who come to her. God grant I may always have a constant will to enjoy her, for the love of whom I have undertaken this work! From the ends of the earth she is near to all who seek her: she instructs within, and converts those who behold her. No man can judge of her; no man can judge well without her. We are not commanded to go to the creature, that we may be happy, but to the Creator, who alone can fill us with bliss. The will fastening itself on the unchangeable good, obtains happiness. But when the will separates itself from the unchangeable good, and seeks her own good exclusively, or directs herself to inferior or external good, she falls from God."—These truths, conceived in the very taste

* Fleury, Vol. V. B. 47. In this, and some other matters, the testimony of a Roman Catholic to the character of the first Protestant Reformer, is of great weight.

* This can hardly be allowed to be the whole of St. Paul's meaning, in the expression "risen with Christ:" nevertheless, the ideas of Claudius are good, so far as he goes.

of the bishop of Hippo, are followed by a long quotation from that father, which expressly forbids the worship of Saints; the substance of which is thus expressed: "We must honour them, because they deserve to be imitated, not worship them with an act of religion. We envy not their bliss in the uninterrupted enjoyment of God, but we love them the more, because we hope for something correspondent to those their excellencies, from him who is our God as well as theirs." These things, says Claudius, are the strongest mysteries of our faith. In defending this truth, I am become a reproach to my neighbours; those, who see me, scoff at me, and point at me to one another. But the Father of mercies and the God of all consolations, has comforted me in my tribulations,* that I may be able to comfort others, who are oppressed with sorrow and affliction. I rely on the protection of him, who has armed me with the armour of righteousness and of faith, the tried shield for my eternal salvation.

Complaints had, it seems, been made against Claudius, at the court of Lewis, for having broken down images through his disease, and for having written against the worship of them. Being reproached by Theodoret for his conduct, Claudius wrote an apology, of which the following is an extract:† "Being obliged to accept the bishopric, when I came to Turin, I found all the churches full of abominations and images; and because I began to destroy what every one admired, every one began to open his mouth against me.—They say, we do not believe that there is any thing divine in the image; we only reverence it in honour of the person whom it represents. I answer, if they, who have quitted the worship of devils, honour the images of saints, they have not forsaken idols; they have only changed the names. For whether you paint upon a wall the pictures of St. Peter or St. Paul, or those of Jupiter, Saturn, or Mercury, they are all dead, and are therefore now neither gods, nor apostles, nor men. If you worship Peter or Paul, you may have changed the name, but the error continues the same. If men must be adored, there would be less absurdity in adoring them when alive, while they are the image of God, than after they are dead, when they only resemble stocks and

stones. And if we are not allowed to adore the works of God, much less are we allowed to adore the works of men.—If the Cross of Christ ought to be adored, because he was nailed to it, for the same reason we ought to adore mangers, because he was laid in one; and swaddling-clothes, because he was wrapped in them." He goes on to mention other similar instances, and adds, "we have not been commanded to adore the cross, but to bear it, and to deny ourselves.—As to your assertion, that I speak against the going to Rome by way of penance, it is not true; I neither approve nor disapprove such pilgrimages; to some they are not useful, to others they are not prejudicial. It is a great perversion of the words, 'thou art Peter,' &c. to infer from them, that eternal life is to be gained by a journey to Rome, and by the intercession of St. Peter.—The Apostolic, that is, the Pope, is not he, who fills the See of the Apostle, but he, who discharges its duties."

Such, says Fleury, were the errors of Claudius of Turin. He then tells us, that they were refuted by a recluse called Dungal. He gives us a few extracts from this writer, which it will be perfectly needless to recite; for, as Fleury owns, Dungal scarcely makes use of any arguments; and "in truth," continues he, "the main proofs in this matter have always been the tradition and constant usage of the Church." In the judgment of men who determine controversies, which enter into the essence of Christianity by the Scriptures alone, the victory of Claudius in this dispute is decisive.

We are obliged, however, to Dungal, for the preservation of the extracts of the apology. In addition to the argumentative parts, there are also some pathetic exhortations interspersed in the work, which show the ardour of the bishop's mind, and the charitable zeal for divine truth and the salvation of souls, with which he was endowed. I shall present the reader with a few sentences.* "All these things are ridiculous, rather worthy of lamentation than of grave discussion; but we are obliged to describe them, in opposition to fools, and to declaim against those hearts of stone, whom the arrows and sentences of the Divine Word cannot pierce, and therefore we are under a

* 2 Cor. i.

† Fleury.

* Allix.

necessity to assault them in this manner. Come to yourselves again, ye wretched transgressors: why are ye gone astray from the truth, and fallen in love with vanity? Why do you make the souls of multitudes the associates of devils, by the worship of idols, estranging them from their Creator, and precipitating them into everlasting damnation?—Return, ye blind, to your light.—Shall we not believe God, when he swears, that neither Noah, nor Daniel, nor Job* shall deliver son or daughter by their righteousness? For this end he makes the declaration, that none might put confidence in the intercession of saints.—Ye fools, who run to Rome, to seek there for the intercession of an Apostle, when will ye be wise? What would St. Augustine say of you, whom we have so often quoted?†

If the works of this great and good man had been published as faithfully as those of his adversaries, I doubt not but he would appear to us in a much more striking-light than he can do from a few imperfect quotations. But his writings were either suppressed or secreted. The reign of idolatry had taken place, and the world worshipped the “*BEAST*.” The labours, however, of Claudius, were not in vain. In his own diocese, at least, he checked the growing evil; and Romish writers have owned, that the valleys of Piedmont, which belonged to his bishopric, preserved his opinions in the ninth and tenth centuries. Whence it is probable, that the Churches of the Waldenses were either derived, or at least received much increase and confirmation from his labours.

If we look, in an evangelical view, at the subject-matter of this bishop’s preaching and expositions, it will appear that the controversy between him and his adversaries was, whether man shall be justified before God BY JESUS CHRIST THROUGH FAITH ALONE, or whether he shall betake himself to OTHER REFUGES for the peace of his disquieted conscience. What those other refuges may be, will much depend on the customs and habits of the times in which a man lives. In an age, like our own, of great civilization and refinement, they will, chiefly, be acts of humanity and kindness to the needy: in an age of superstition, they will be ceremonial observances, and the whole apparatus of WILL-WORSHIP.†—

Against the false reliefs of a burdened conscience, which the popedom exhibited, this first Protestant reformer militated in much Christian zeal, and pointed out to his hearers and his readers the mediation of Jesus Christ, as the sole and all-sufficient object of dependence. With what success this was done among his people, we have no account; but, doubtless, so great a light was not set up in vain; and could I recite the effects of his labours in Piedmont, the account would in all probability be both pleasing and profitable to evangelical minds. Let us see what further discoveries we can make of his spirit and views, from the extracts of his writings drawn from another of his adversaries.

This* was JONAS, BISHOP OF ORLEANS. He wrote three books against Claudius, filled with invectives. He mentions, however, such reasonings made use of by his adversary, as it was not in his power to overturn, particularly the authority of the second commandment, on which hinge, indeed, the whole controversy turns, so far as it relates to the worship of images. In regard to pilgrimages to Rome, Claudius observes, that the greater part, in consequence of them, become worse men than they were before. In opposing the popedom, he observes, that men, void of all spiritual understanding, misapplying those words of our Lord, “I will give unto thee the keys,” &c.† ignorant men, setting aside all spiritual understanding, hope to obtain eternal life by making pilgrimages to Rome. Hence we see, that the power of the popedom was much founded on the misguided consciences of men. Persons distressed, on account of their sins, naturally catch at every support, which offers them relief. And the true light of the Gospel of peace no longer shining, they availed themselves of the delusory consolations offered by the popedom; and thus, at once, gained a false peace, hardened themselves in real wickedness, and supported the grandeur of Antichrist. What a blessing is the real Gospel! It both consoles and sanctifies the sinner, and removes the most powerful incitements to superstition. But, to proceed with the words of Claudius. “It is not said, ‘whatsoever thou shalt bind in heaven, shall be bound on earth.’—By this we should know, that

* Ezek. xiv.

† See Coloss. ii.

* Centuriat. Magd. Cent. IX.

† Matt. xvi. 19.

the ministry of the bishops of the Church continue only so long as they remain upon earth. After they have left this world, it ceases. St. Peter has no longer any influence in the government of the Church militant; and his successors exercise the office, so long as they live indeed, but no longer.* From the year 823, Claudius wrote against the prevail-

Claudius, for sixteen years, writes against the prevailing superstitions.

Dies,

A. D. 839.

ing superstition, and lived to the year 839. That he was not put to death for confessing the real faith of Christ, seems to have been, under Providence, owing to the protection of the French court. The cause, which he espoused, was still, in part, supported in the western churches; and the Roman hierarchy was not yet able to establish idolatry in its full extent, and to punish all its opposers. It is proper to add, that even the adversaries of Claudius did not insist on the worship of images; they only asserted that they were innocent and useful. So far were the decrees of the papacy from being owned as decisive, through Europe. At the same time, it must be confessed, that the middle path, which first had the sanction of Gregory, and was afterwards confirmed by the Carolingians and the council of Frankfort, naturally paved the way for the gradual establishment of idolatry.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CASE OF GOTTESCHALCUS.

THE subject of predestination and grace had been formerly controverted in the churches of France, with a considerable degree of acuteness and ingenuity, and what is still more pleasing to a Christian mind, with seriousness, candour, and

charity.* We have seen with what zeal the doctrine of divine grace had been defended and illustrated by the followers of Augustine, and what a salutary influence had attended that doctrine on the knowledge, the spirit, and the lives of Christians. It has appeared also, that many who, partly through an ill-grounded fear of pernicious consequences, and partly through a misunderstanding of the nature of the subject, were averse to the sentiments of Augustine, did still sincerely abhor Pelagianism, and with a happy inconsistency, lived humbly dependent on divine grace alone, though in words they maintained Semi-Pelagianism. But, as superstition, idolatry, and ignorance increased, the truly evangelical views of Augustine were more and more thrown into the shade, and the case of Gotteschalcus showed, that it was now no longer permitted to a divine to promulge the sentiments of the bishop of Hippo with impunity.

Gotteschalcus was born in Germany; from early life he had been a monk; and had devoted himself to theological inquiries. He was peculiarly fond of the writings of Augustine, and entered with much zeal into his sentiments.† That he really held the doctrines of that father, seems evident from the account which is transmitted to us, though it is but scanty. He expressly owned, that the wicked were condemned for their own demerits. If he was charged with making God the author of sin, it was no more than what befel the bishop of Hippo; and Fleury himself owns, that he was misrepresented by his adversaries. The most culpable thing, which I find in him, if indeed a certain confession of faith, ascribed to him, be genuine, is this, that he offered to undergo a trial by fire, on this condition, that if he was preserved unhurt, his doctrine should be allowed to be divine. If he was really guilty of this

* See p. 485.

* I have added a word or two explanatory of the meaning, which, on account of the imperfection of the quotation, is sufficiently embarrassed. I apprehend, he is inferring from the real words of our Lord, "whosoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven," that St. Peter's episcopal acts terminated with his life; whereas, if it had been said, whatsoever thou shalt bind in heaven, shall be bound on earth, some countenance might seem to be given to the idea of the continuance of his power on earth, in the persons of his successors. Cent. Magd. Cent. IX. 113.

† I have extracted the best account of this person which I could from Fleury and Dupin, both Roman Catholic writers: I have avoided myself also of the remarks of Mosheim. From the writings of the Magdeburgensis Centuriators, where I might have expected the most equitable and the most just account, I could collect nothing. They handle the subject briefly and confusedly, and join with the enemies of Gotteschalcus in condemning him, without affording their readers any proper materials, on which they might form a judgment for themselves.

enthusiastic presumption, the issue of the persecution which he afterwards underwent, was calculated to humble him, and cause him to learn more practically than he had ever done, the real power of those doctrines for which he honestly suffered.

About the year 846, he left his monastery, and went into Dalmatia and Pannonia, where he spread the doctrines of Augustine, under a pretence, it was said by his enemies, of preaching the Gospel to the infidels. At his return, he remained some time in Lombardy, and in 847, he held a conference with Notingus, bishop of Vienne, concerning predestination. His

zeal gave offence to the bishop, who prevailed on Rabanus, the archbishop of Mentz, to undertake the confutation of the novel heresy, as it was now decreed. Rabanus calumniated Gotteschalculus with those monstrous and licentious consequences, with which the doctrines of divine grace have in all ages been asspersed, and from which St. Paul himself was not exempted: and having dressed the sentiments of his adversary in the most odious colours, he found it no hard task to expose him to infamy. The learned monk undertook to defend himself in writing, and proposed the subject to the consideration of the most able men of his time; and, against the great credit and authority of his adversary, he opposed the renowned name of Augustine. But no cause ever appeared with more disadvantage in our times than that of Gotteschalculus. For we have not his treatise, composed against Rabanus; only some fragments of it have been preserved to us, by Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims, who, the reader will soon be convinced, was not a man fit to be trusted with the

Gotteschalculus condemned in the synod of Mentz,

A. D. 848.

care of his reputation. In a synod held at Mentz, Gotteschalculus was condemned; and Rabanus, observing that he was of the diocese of Soissons, which was subject to the archbishop of Rheims, sent him to Hincmar, calling him a vagabond, and declaring that he had seduced several persons, who were become less careful of their salvation, since they had learned from Gotteschalculus to say, Why should I labour for my salvation?—If I am predesti-

tinated to damnation, I cannot avoid it; and, on the contrary, if I am predestinated to salvation, whatever sins I am guilty of, I shall certainly be saved.*

Hincmar entered fully into the views of Rabanus; and, in a council of bishops, examined Gotteschalculus, who still maintained his doctrine with firmness. On this account he was condemned as a heretic, degraded from the priesthood, and ordered to be beaten with rods and imprisoned. As nothing, however, was proved against him, except his adherence to the sentiments of Augustine, which were still held in estimation in the Church, this shows, says Du Pin, that he was an injured man.

And now the presumptuous boasts of Gotteschalculus, if they were his boasts indeed, met with a humiliating check. For, while he was whipped in the presence of the Emperor Charles and the bishops with great severity, and was given to understand that he must cast into the fire with his own hand a writing, in which he had made a collection of Scripture-texts, in order to prove his opinion, he, at length, overpowered by his sufferings, dropped the book into the flames; after which he was kept close prisoner by Hincmar, in a monastery. This method of convincing a heretic of his error, seems, however, to have been by no means satisfactory to him who had made use of it. For Hincmar still took pains to persuade Gotteschalculus to retract his sentiments, but in vain. The injured pastor maintained, with his last breath, the doctrine for which he suffered, and died in prison in the year 870.†

Gotteschalculus dies in prison, A. D. 870.

Hincmar hearing that he lay at the point of death, sent him a formulary, which he was to subscribe, in order to his being received into the communion of the Church. Gotteschalculus rejected the offer with indignation. He refused to retract

* It is evident, that such reasoning as this, might, with equal plausibility, be alleged against the doctrine of the ninth chapter to the Romans. Whoever would see this subject sifted to the bottom, may consult Edwardes's admirable treatise on Freewill, where he will find the vulgar objections proved, I think, irrefragably to be fallacious. In the Analogy of Bishop Butler also (Chap. VI. Part I. of the Opinion of Necessity) he will meet with some excellent observations.

† Cave.

to the last; and was denied Christian burial, by the orders of Hincmar.

This is all that I can find material concerning Gottschalcus. That he was a humble and sincere follower of Christ in the main, will scarce be doubted by those who make a fair estimate of his constancy in suffering, and at the same time reflect, that no moral turpitude is affixed to his memory. Even in that age there wanted not men, who remonstrated loudly against the barbarity with which he had been treated. Remigius, archbishop of

Lyons, distinguished himself among these; and, in a council held at Valence, in Dauphny, in the year 855, both Gottschalcus and his doctrine were vindicated and defended. Two subsequent councils confirmed the decrees of this council. The Churches of Lyons, Vienne, and Arles, formerly renowned for piety, vigorously supported the sentiments of Gottschalcus; and it was apparent, that all relish for the doctrines of grace was not lost in the Church. It is very extraordinary, that the cause of Gottschalcus should prove, in the end, victorious, while he himself remained under the power of persecution. But the great secular influence of Hincmar, who for near forty years presided at Rheims, and made himself highly useful to kings and princes, seems to account for this.

It would be uninteresting to detail an account of the writings on both sides, which were published on the occasion of this controversy. One lesson the case before us is peculiarly calculated to teach, namely, not to condemn any person for consequences which others may draw from his doctrine, and which he himself both speculatively and practically disavows.* This injustice was never more flagrantly committed, than in the transactions which we have briefly reviewed. Of Hincmar, much information indeed is left us in ecclesiastical story; but I do not seem to have any more employment for him in this work, than I have for the princes of France and Germany of that period. It is not hard to form, on the whole, some estimate of the state of religion at that time in France. The spirit

of Christianity was much decayed; but there were, doubtless, a number of persons, to whom Christ and his grace were precious: and the influence of evangelical truth was still so strong, that all the cruelty, activity, and artifice of Hincmar, one of the most subtle politicians of that age, were not able to extirpate it.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS CENTURY.

IN this century the churches of the East and West, through the pride and ambition of the pontiffs of Rome and Constantinople, began to be separated from one another. Of such a division, which makes a great noise, in what is commonly called ecclesiastical history, it is sufficient for a historian of the Church of Christ to say, that the wound, after repeated attempts, was never healed. Both the East and the West, indeed, were full of idolatry and darkness, and seemed to vie with each other in supporting the kingdom of Satan. Providence, however, made use of the ambitious spirit of the prelates for the still more extensive propagation of the Gospel. In this chapter I shall collect the information upon this subject, which may be extracted from an enormous mass of ecclesiastical rubbish; and, at the same time, shall lay before my readers some evidences of the progress of the good work, among the nations, which had been, in part, evangelized in the two last centuries.

Constantine, afterwards called Cyril, was born at Thessalonica, of a Roman family, and was educated at Constantinople. In 846, the famous Photius, who, by much iniquity, at length obtained the bishopric of Constantinople, envying Ignatius, at that time bishop, contended, in opposition to him, that every man had two souls. Being reproved by Cyril, he said, that he meant not to hurt any one, but only to try the logical abilities of Ignatius. "You have thrown your darts into the crowd," said Cyril, "yet pretend that none will be hurt. How keen soever the eyes of your wisdom be, they are blinded by the smoke of avarice and envy. Your passion against

Photius
disputes
with Ignatius, the
Patriarch
of Constantinople
A. D. 846.

* See Burnet's Exposition of XXXIX Articles, Preface, p. 8, 9.—And Article 17. p. 106. Fol. Edit.

Ignatius has deceived you." Cyril indeed seems to have been as much superior to Photius* in piety, as he was his inferior in learning: he became one of the most active and useful missionaries of this century: and Providence opened to him a door of solid utility among the idolatrous nations.†

The Bulgarians were a barbarous and savage people, whose neighbourhood had long been troublesome to the Greek emperors. The sister of their king Bogoris, having been taken captive in a military incursion, was brought to Constantinople, and there adopted Christianity. Upon her redemption and return to her own country, she gave a strong evidence, that her change of religion had been merely nominal. She was struck with grief and compassion, to see the king, her brother, enslaved to idolatry, and she used the most cogent arguments in her power, in order to convince him of the vanity of his worship. Bogoris was affected with her arguments; but was not prevailed upon to receive the Gospel, till, a famine and a plague‡ appearing in Bulgaria, she persuaded him to pray to the God of the Christians. He did so, and the plague ceased. There was something so remarkable in the event, that Bogoris was induced to send for missionaries to Constantinople; and at length received baptism, together with many of his people.§ Cyril and his devout brother Methodius, were the instruments of these blessings to the Bulgarians. Bogoris had desired Methodius to draw him a picture. Methodius chose for his subject the last judgment, and explained it. This

Bogoris is supposed to have induced the king to receive baptism. A. D. 861.

The event happened about the year 861.‡ That same pope Nicolas, who so warmly applauded the sanguinary exploits of the empress Theodora against the Paulicians, rejoiced at the opportunity, which this religious change among the Bulgarians afforded him, of extending his influence. He sent bishops, who preached and baptized throughout the country: and Bogoris sent his son to Rome, with many Lords: he consulted

the pope on a variety of subjects, and entreated him to send pastors into Bulgaria. Nicolas rejoiced, says Fleury,* not only on account of the conversion of the Bulgarians, but the more, because they came so far to seek instruction from the Holy See. They had, however, though attended with many superstitions, the word of God, and the name of Christ introduced among them. The Saviour, in some sense, was preached, notwithstanding that pride and sinister motives predominated altogether in the Roman See; and St. Paul, in such a case, would have said, "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."† Nor is there any reason to believe, that all the missionaries would be no less corrupt than the pope: on the contrary, we cannot doubt but the word was not preached altogether in vain. These transactions took place about the year 866.

Successes of the missionaries, A. D. 866.

About the same time Cyril, and his brother Methodius, missionaries among the Bulgarians, laboured also among the Slavonians and the Chazari.‡ These people lived on the banks of the Danube, and begged the emperor Michael III. and his mother Theodora to send them some instructors. Cyril and his brother Methodius were sent to preach to them. The Cham and his whole nation were baptized: and Cyril gave a noble proof of his disinterestedness in refusing those presents, which the munificence of the prince would have heaped upon him.§

Cyril arriving at Chersona, continued there some time, to learn the language of the Chazari; which is supposed to have been the Slavonian tongue, because it is certain that Constantine translated the sacred Books into that language. And as the people had not then the use of letters, he invented an alphabet for their use, and was very successful in teaching Christianity among the Chazari. He made the greater impression on their minds, because of the unquestionable proofs which he gave them of his disinterestedness. After this, Bartilas, prince of Moravia, understanding what had been done among the Chazari, desired the Greek emperor Michael to send some missionaries to instruct his people likewise in Christianity. Michael sent the same Con-

* Photius himself became patriarch of Constantinople about A. D. 857.

† See Alban Butler, Vol. XII.

‡ Porphyrogenetus.

§ See Alban Butler, Vol. XII.

* Fleury, B. L. 49.

† Philipp. i. 18.

‡ Fleury, B. L. 54.

§ Alban Butler, Vol. XII.

stantine and Methodius, who carried with them the same Slavonian Gospel, taught the children the letters, which they had invented, laboured in their mission, and instructed the people four years and a half.

The king of Moravia was baptized with many of his subjects. Cyril died a monk: Methodius was consecrated bishop of Moravia. The Slavonian tongue, said to have been invented by these two missionaries, is, to this day, used in the liturgy of the Moravians. Complaint was made to Pope John VIII. of the novelty of worshipping in a barbarous tongue; but he condescended to own himself satisfied with the reasons assigned by the missionaries. Bogoris,

Bogoris
receives his
crown.

A. D. 880.

king of Bulgaria, gave up his crown about the year 880, and retired into a monastery. Methodius, after a long course of labours, died in an advanced age.*

These were noble works, and some divine wisdom, amidst all the superstitions, no doubt, attended them. In the mean time, Nicolas of Rome, and Photius of Constantinople, two of the proudest men of any age, were acrimoniously inveighing against one another, and striving each to secure to himself the obedience of the new converts. There is reason to hope, that the missionaries themselves were of a better spirit; and if I had materials of their transactions before me, I would with pleasure present them to the reader; but the squabbles of the prelates themselves for ecclesiastical dominion, and the effects of those squabbles, are scarcely worth his attention.

It appears from one of the invectives of Photius, against Nicolas, that the Russians, hitherto barbarous and savage, had

Provinces
of Dalmatia
submit
mission-
aries.

A. D. 867.

received a Christian bishop, and were then under instructions. Also, about the year 867, certain provinces of Dalmatia sent an embassy to Constantinople, imploring the emperor Basilus to supply them

with Christian teachers. Their request was granted, and the pale of the Church was extended throughout those provinces.†

If we turn our eyes toward the countries which had been evangelized in the

last century, we may discern some traces of the spirit of godliness still remaining among them. Length of time, under the influence of natural depravity, had not, as yet, destroyed all the seeds of that divine simplicity, which, as we have had repeated occasion to observe, is always the most pure in the infancy of religion. Frederick of Devonshire, nephew to Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, so renowned in the last century, was appointed bishop of Utrecht; and dining with the emperor, Lewis the Meek, was exhorted by him to discharge his office with faithfulness and integrity. The bishop, pointing to a fish on the table, asked whether it was proper to take hold of it by the head or by the tail. "By the head, to be sure," replied the emperor.

"Then I must begin my career of faithfulness," answered Frederic, "with your majesty." He proceeded to rebuke the emperor for an incestuous connexion, which he openly maintained with Judith the empress; and, in the spirit of John the Baptist, told him, "that it was not lawful for him to have her." Lewis had not expected this rebuke; and, like Herod, was not disposed to give up his Herodias. No sooner did the empress hear of this rebuke, than, in the true temper of an incensed adulteress, she began to plot the destruction of Frederic; and, by the help of assassins, she at length effected it. Frederic being mortally wounded, insisted, however, that no blood should be shed on his account; and died in a spirit of martyrdom worthy of the relation of Boniface. In him the Hollanders

lost a faithful prelate; but his death would preach a salutary doctrine among them. Frederic was murdered about the year 833.*

Murder of
the bishop
of Utrecht,

A. D. 833.

Haymo, a monk of Fulda, a scholar of Alcuin, was chosen bishop of Halberstadt in Saxony, in the year 841. He was by descent an Englishman, a relation of Bede, and took much pains in preaching to the people. His writings are voluminous, but the matter of them is chiefly extracted from the fathers. He assisted in the condemnation of Gottschalkus at Mentz; nor is it hard to conceive,

Haymo
elected
bishop of
Halber-
stadt,

A. D. 841.

that a pious person might be deceived by

* All. Hist. Vol. XII.

† Porphyrogen. See Mosheim, Chap. I. Cent. IX.

* L. Gulph's Hist. See Cellier's Ecc. Hist. Vol. I. Du Pin, Cent. IX.

the elaborate representations of Rabanus. though I should think it very improbable, that Haymo would be at all concerned in the barbarities afterwards exercised on the supposed heretic at Rheims. For Haymo seems to have thought and written on the doctrines of grace with more unction and vigour than most of his contemporaries. He composed comments on many parts of the Holy Scriptures. A few specimens may serve to show what sort of doctrine was then preached to the recent Churches of Germany.

"By* the book of life, we ought to understand the divine predestination, as it is written, the Lord knoweth them that are his."

"Man of himself departing from God returns not of himself to God. God works all in all; by which words human arrogance is removed, since without the Holy Spirit our weakness can effect no real good, whether great or small."†

"We are not only unable to perfect any good, without divine grace and mercy, preceding and following us, but not even to think any. For the grace of God prevents us, that we may be willing, and follows us, that we may be able. Every good thing that we have, the good will, and the good work, is not from ourselves, but from God."

His views of the distinction between the law and the Gospel, a subject in his time very little understood, have a considerable degree of perspicuity. "In the law, no room is reserved for repentance, but its language is, the soul that sinneth shall die. The Gospel saith, I will not die the death of a sinner.—The Law is not of faith.‡ It is the province of faith to believe and to hope things invisible. The law therefore is not fulfilled by faith, but by works. But the Gospel is fulfilled by faith rather than by works; for faith alone saves!§ Precious sentiments! well understood by serious and humble spirits, coming to Christ for rest, who find themselves by the law debarred of all hope of salvation, because of their consciousness of entire depravity. It is not necessary to give distinct quotations, in order to prove that Haymo had the same imperfect and inaccurate views of justification which we have observed in Augustine.

"The faith, by which we believe in God, is given by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: it is not in man naturally, it is given by God; for, if it were in us, by nature, all would have it.—Faith, remission of sins, and all the gifts of God, are freely given to believers."*

Does it not appear a cruel thing to disfigure such lovely pictures of evangelical truth! But historical veracity is a stubborn thing. The same Haymo, who knew so much of Christ, was so infected with the growth of idolatrous superstition, that, in an homily concerning virgins, he says, "it is highly fitting that we supplicate her,"—he means some virgin, whose festival he was then celebrating,—"with devout prayers, that she may make us comfortable in this life by her merits and prayers, and in the next acceptable to God."† How inconsistent are these sentiments with his avowed faith in the Mediator! But such was the torrent of the times!—I see Germany, which had been happily tutored in the infant simplicity of Christian faith, gradually perverted by the idolatry which derived its strength from the papal dominion. Haymo, however, most probably did not mean what he said, in the full import of his own words; and he seems to have felt so sincerely the spirit of Gospel-truth, that I am tempted to suppose, that his homilies were interpolated by what are called pious frauds, the introduction of which became a common practice in the dark ages.

Haymo continued bishop of Halberstadt for twelve years, and Haymo died, which shone in the midst of A. D. 853. darkness!

We have seen some evidences of the power of Christian truth, in this century, among the recent Churches of Germany and Holland. Let us now look to the north of Europe, and see by what gradations Divine Providence paved the way for the propagation of the Gospel in the frozen regions of Scandinavia,‡ and on the shores of the Baltic, which had hitherto been enveloped in the most deplorable darkness of Paganism.

Adelard, cousin-german to Charlemagne, was a bright luminary in the Christian world at the beginning of this

* Magd. Cent. IX. p. 52.

† Id. p. 60.

* Magd. p. 67.

† Magd. p. 111.

‡ Galatians, iii. 12.

§ Magd. 64.

‡ This term commonly includes the three kingdoms of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway.

Adelard,
a Monk of
Corbie, in
Picardy, a
shining
character.

century. He had been invited to the court in his youth: but fearing the infection of such a mode of life, he had retired; and, at the age of twenty years became a monk of Corbie, in Picardy,* and was at

length chosen abbot of the monastery. His imperial relation, however, forced him again to attend the court, where he still preserved the dispositions of a recluse, and took every opportunity, which business allowed, for private prayer and meditation. After the death of Charlemagne he was, on unjust suspicions, banished by Lewis the Meek, to a monastery on the coast of Aquitaine, in the isle of Hiere. After a banishment of five years, Lewis, sensible at length of his own injustice, recalled Adelard, and heaped on him the highest honours. The

monk was, however, the same man in prosperity and in adversity, and in 823 obtained leave to return to his Corbie.

Every week he addressed each of the monks in particular: he exhorted them in pious discourses; and laboured for the spiritual good of the country around his monastery. His liberality seems to have bordered on excess: his humility induced him to receive advice from the meanest monk: when he was desired to live less austere, he would frequently say, I will take care of your servant, that he may be enabled to attend on you the longer. Another Adelard, who had governed the monastery during his banishment, by the direction of the first Adelard, prepared the foundation of a distinct monastery, called new Corbie, near Paderborn, beside the Weser, as a nursery for evangelical labourers, who should instruct the northern nations. The first Adelard completed the scheme: went himself to new Corbie twice; and settled its discipline. The success of this truly charitable project was great: many learned and zealous missionaries were furnished from the new seminary: and it became a light to the north of Europe. Adelard promoted learning in his monasteries; instructed the people both in Latin and French; and, after his second

return from Germany to old Corbie, he died in 827, aged 73. Such is the account given us of Adelard, a charac-

ter, there is reason to believe, of eminent piety. The fruits of his faithful labours appear to have been still greater after his death than during his life. To convert monasteries into seminaries of pastoral education was a thought far above the taste of the age in which he lived; and tended to emancipate those superstitious institutions from the unprofitable and illiberal bondage in which they had subsisted for many generations.

In the year 814, Harold, king of Denmark, being expelled from his dominions, implored the protection of the emperor Lewis, the son and successor of Charlemagne. That prince persuaded him to receive Christian baptism; and foreseeing that Harold's

Expulsion
of Harold,
king of
Denmark,
A. D. 814.

reception of Christianity would increase the difficulty of his restoration, he gave him a district in Friesland for his present maintenance. Lewis, dismissing Harold to his own country, inquired after some pious person, who might accompany him, and confirm both the king and his attendants in the Christian religion. But it was not easy to find a man disposed to undertake such a journey. At length Vala, abbot of old Corbie, who had succeeded his brother Adelard, whose history we have just considered, said to the emperor, "I have, in my monastery, a monk, who earnestly wishes to suffer for the sake of Christ; a man of understanding and integrity, and peculiarly fitted for such a work. But I cannot promise, that he will undertake the journey." The emperor ordered him to send for the man; Anscarius was his name. When the nature of the employment was opened to the monk, he professed his readiness to go. "I by no means command you, said Vala, to enter on so difficult and dangerous a service; I leave it to your option." Anscarius, however, persisted in his resolution: it was matter of surprise to many, that he should choose to expose himself among strangers, barbarians, and pagans; much pains were taken by many to dissuade him; but in vain: while preparations were making for his departure, he gave himself up to reading and prayer.

* I have extracted the subsequent account of Anscarius from various parts of Fleury, in his history of the 9th century; not without an attention also to the history of the same missionary in Alban Butler, and in the *Centur. Magd.*

Dies,
A. D. 827.

Corbie, he died in 827, aged 73. Such is the account given us of Adelard, a charac-

This excellent monk had been employed as a teacher, both in old and new Corbie, and had distinguished himself by his talents and virtues. Aubert, a monk of noble birth, a great confidant of Vala, and steward of his house, offered himself as a companion to Anscarius. Harold, with the two strangers, proceeded on his journey; but neither he nor his attendants, rude and barbarous in their manners, were at all solicitous for the accommodation of the missionaries, who therefore suffered much in the beginning of their journey. When the company arrived at Cologne, Hadebald the archbishop, commiserating the two strangers, gave them a bark, in which they might convey their effects. Harold, struck with the convenience of the accommodation, entered into the vessel with the missionaries; and they went down the Rhine into the sea, and came to the frontiers of Denmark. But Harold finding access to his dominions impossible, because of the power of those who had usurped the sovereignty, remained in Friezeland, in the district assigned to him by the emperor.

This king of Denmark seems to have been appointed by Divine Providence, only as an instrument to introduce Anscarius into the mission. For we hear little more of him afterwards. The two French monks laboured with zeal and success in Friezeland, both among Christians and Pagans. Harold sent some of his own slaves to be taught by them; and in a little time they had above twelve children in their school. Above two years they laboured, and were made instruments of good to souls: after this Aubert ended his days by a disease.

About the year 829, many Swedes having expressed a desire to be instructed in Christianity, Anscarius

received a commission from the emperor Lewis to visit Sweden. Another monk of old Corbie, Vitmar by name, was assigned as his companion; and a pastor was left to attend on king Harold, in the room of Anscarius. In the passage, the two missionaries were met by pirates, who took the ship and all its effects. On this occasion, Anscarius lost the emperor's presents, and forty volumes, which he had collected for the use of the ministry. But his mind was still determined: and he and his partner having with difficulty got to land, they gave themselves up to

the direction of Providence, and walked on foot a long way, now and then crossing some arms of the sea in boats. Such are the triumphs of Christian faith and love. They arrived at Birca, from the ruins of which Stockholm took its rise, though built at some distance from it.* The king of Sweden received them favourably; and his council unanimously agreed to permit them to remain in the country, and to preach the Gospel. Success attended their pious efforts. Many Christian captives in Sweden rejoiced at the opportunity of the communion of Saints which was now restored to them; and, among others, Herigarius, governor of the city, was baptized. This man erected a church on his own estate, and persevered in the profession and support of the Gospel.

After six months, the two missionaries returned with letters written by the king's own hand, into France, and informed Lewis of their success. The consequence was, that Anscarius was appointed archbishop of Hamburg. This great city, being in the neighbourhood of Denmark, was henceforth looked on as the metropolis of all the countries north of the Elbe which should embrace Christianity. The mission into Denmark, was at the same time attended to; and Gausbert, a relation of Ebbo, archbishop of Rheims, who, as well as Anscarius, was concerned in these missions, was sent to reside as a bishop in Sweden: there the number of Christians increased. But perhaps the reader has anticipated the observation; namely, that it was the genius of these dark ages to provide for the hierarchy prematurely; and to constitute bishops and dioceses over large districts in which scarcely any Christians were to be found.

Anscarius—such was the ecclesiastical discipline of the times,—by the order of the emperor Lewis, went to Rome, that he might receive the confirmation of the new archbishopric of Hamburg. Returning to the diocese, he gained over many Pagans, brought up children in the Christian faith, and redeemed captives, whom he instructed and employed in the ministry. In the year 845, his faith was tried by a severe affliction. Hamburg was besieged, taken, and pil-

Further account of Anscarius, and of the taking of Hamburg, A. D. 845.

* Puffendorff's Hist. of Sweden.

laged by the Normans, and he himself escaped with difficulty. On this occasion he lost all his effects: but his mind was so serene, that he was not heard to complain: "The Lord gave," said he, "and the Lord hath taken away." It was no inconsiderable addition to his sufferings, to hear, that Gausbert, whom he had sent into Sweden, was banished through a popular insurrection; in consequence of which, the work of the ministry was for some years at a stand in that country. Anscarius, reduced to great poverty, and deserted by many of his followers, persisted still with unwearied patience in the exercise of his mission in the north of Europe, till the bishopric of Bremen was conferred upon him. Hamburg and Bremen were from that time considered as united in one diocese. It was not till some pains were taken to overcome his scruples, that he could be prevailed on to accept of this provision for his wants.

Anscarius
travels a
Christian
teacher in-
to Sweden,
A. D. 852.

About the year 852, Anscarius sent a priest, called Ardgarius, into Sweden, to strengthen the faith of the few Christians, who remained there. Among these, was Herigarius, who had supported the cause of Christ, while it was in the most feeble and afflicted state.

Though Anscarius had made no great impression on Sweden, he was not discouraged in his views of propagating the faith in the north. He still had his eye on Denmark, which had been his first object; and having gained the friendship of Eric, who reigned there, he was enabled to gain a footing in that country; and to plant the Gospel with some success at Sleswick, a port then much frequented by merchants. Many persons, who had been baptized at Hamburg, resided there; and a number of Pagans were induced to countenance Christianity in some degree. Anscarius, through the friendship of Eric, found means also to visit Sweden once more. A commendatory letter from that prince to Oloof, king of Sweden, insured him a favourable reception in the last-mentioned country. The zealous bishop arrived at Birca, where a Pagan, who pretended to intimacy with the gods, opposed his designs with arguments adapted to the superstitious notions of the people. Oloof himself informed Anscarius, that it must be decided by lot, whether he should be permitted to preach Christianity in Sweden. The missionary

prayed, and the lot decided in favour of his design. The profession of the Gospel was established at Birca, and Christianity made a great progress in Sweden. Anscarius returned into Denmark, and laboured there with success. The missionaries, whom he employed, were directed by him to follow the example of St. Paul, by labouring with their own hands for bread; a very necessary practice in those poor countries.

In the year 865, this Apostle of the north was called to his rest. He had lived six years after the union of the dioceses of Hamburg and Bremen, and had applied himself to the duties of his office, both as a governor and a preacher of the Church, with indefatigable assiduity. A terror to

The ex-
cellent
Anscarius
dies,
A. D. 865.

the proud, and a comfort to the humble, he knew how to divide the word of truth, and to give each of the flock his portion in due season. In all good works, and particularly in his care of redeeming captives, he was eminently distinguished. He erected a hospital at Bremen, in which passengers were relieved, and the sick were taken care of, which, in that rude age, was an uncommon instance of liberality and compassion. His example and authority had great influence even among those who sold captives to Pagans, or kept them in slavery. They were induced by his exhortations to set the prisoners at liberty. He is said to have had the gift of miracles; and though I cannot give full credit even to the most plausible stories of this nature, which are related of him, because of the superstitious credulity and fraudulent inventions of the times, I must confess with Fleury, that if ever the gift of miracles may be supposed to have existed after the first ages of Christianity, it may be believed, most probably, to have been vouchsafed to those, who were concerned in the first plantation of Churches.* And it should be remem-

* Nelson is of the same opinion. "Q. Does it seem probable, that if the conversion of infidels were attempted by men of honest and sincere minds, God would extraordinarily countenance such a design? A. 'Tis agreeable to reason to think he would, and in no way contrary to Scripture. For, as the wisdom of God is never found to be prodigal in multiplying the effects of his Almighty power, so it is never wanting to afford all necessary evidences and motives of conversion." Nelson's Festivals, p. 259.

bered, that Sweden and Denmark were, under God, indebted to Anacarius for the first light of the Gospel. This extraordinary person, however, was by no means disposed to value himself on miraculous powers; as he appears to have been acquainted with a holy influence of a more excellent nature, 1 Cor. chap. xii. last verse. "If I had found favour with God," said he, one day, when he heard his miracles extolled, "I should beseech him to grant me one single miracle, even his grace to sanctify my nature." It is remarked of him, that he never did any thing without recommending himself first to God by prayer. A short fragment of an epistle to the bishops is the whole of his writings which I can find to be extant.* "I beg your earnest prayers to God for the growth and fruitfulness of this mission among the Pagans. For, by the grace of God, the Church of Christ is now founded both in Denmark and Sweden; and the pastors discharge their office without molestation. May God Almighty make you all partakers of this work of godly charity, and joint heirs with Christ in heavenly glory!" The Centuriators have charged him with idolatry; but the only proof, which they give, is his superstitious attachment to relics: an evil so general, I had almost said UNIVERSAL, at that time, that it cannot fix any particular blot on the character of Anacarius. I see no proof of his having practised or encouraged image-worship. It is true, that he was devoted to the See of Rome. And, in those days, how few were not so! The Centuriators in their own attachment to the prejudices of the age, in which they lived, might have found a charitable apology for those of the northern Apostle. If candour be not exercised in such circumstances, we shall scarcely be able to see, for many ages, even the existence of a Church of Christ. A Luther, firmly and decidedly resisting, and even despising the current maxims of his own age, is a rare phenomenon.

I have the satisfaction to observe, that Mosheim is, in the case of Anacarius, more candid than the Centuriators. He allows, that the labours of that missionary, and in general of the other missionaries in this century, deserve the highest commendations. If it were possible to exhibit a circumstantial account of Anacarius,

most probably the justice of Mosheim's encomium on his character would be ascertained beyond the reach of contradiction. What else but the genuine love of God in Christ could have furnished the mind with such faith in Providence, perseverance in hardships, and active charity for souls?

Rembert, his confidant, was appointed bishop of Bremen, by the dying words of the Apostle. He wrote the life of his predecessor, a treatise which seems to have furnished historians with the greatest part of their materials concerning Anacarius. Rembert himself presided over the Church of the north, for twenty-three years, and established their discipline and ecclesiastical consistory. He was not unworthy of the confidence of his predecessor, and lived and died an example of piety. He began to preach among the people of Brandenburg, who hitherto had been altogether pagan, and made some progress toward their conversion. He died in 888.

Rembert made bishop of Bremen.

Dies,

A. D. 888.

Jeron, an English Presbyterian went over to Holland, in this century, and preached the Gospel there: and, so far as appears, with faithfulness. He was crowned with martyrdom about the year 849.*

Jeron, an English missionary, martyred in Holland, A. D. 849.

Patto, a Scotch abbot, was appointed bishop of Verden, by Charlemagne. The Centuriators only tell us, that he strenuously supported popish corruptions and human traditions. But Crantzius, from whom they collected this account, would have informed them also of better things.† Patto, it appears, had great success among the infidels, but was grieved to see Christian professors disgracing the faith by their vices. He faithfully rebuked them; and for his honest zeal in preaching against the sins of nominal Christians, was murdered about the year 815.

Patto, a Scotch abbot, murdered, A. D. 815.

Tanes, who had succeeded Patto in the Scotch abbey, after a time left his situation, and followed his countryman into Germany, not so much with a desire of martyrdom, say the Centuriators, as of obtaining a richer benefice. Uncharitable surmise! There is too much of this leaven to be found in a work, which, in

* Crantzius. See Cent. Magd. Cent. IX. p. 324.

* Cent. Magd. † See A. Butler, Vol. II.

Crantz-
ius's ac-
count of
Tanes.

other respects, abounds in piety and industry. The same Crantzius informs us, that Tanes, in fact, laboured in conjunction with Patto, and, after a while, was appointed his successor to the See of Verden. The considerate reader will judge, whether the sufferings and hardships which Tanes and Patto had sustained among barbarians were likely to render the bishopric of Verden an enviable object of ambition!

I know no other ground on which the

propagation of the Gospel may be discovered in this century. The accounts of the labours of Spanish pastors among the Mahometans, or of the sufferings of the Christians under the persecutions of the Moors, are not sufficiently authenticated.

The reader, however, has seen, in this dark century, a clear demonstration, that the Church of Christ still existed. He may now, if he please, descend with me to the ultimate point of Christian depression.

CENTURY X.

CHAPTER I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH IN
THIS CENTURY.

THE famous Annalist of the Roman Church, whose partiality to the See of Rome is notorious, has, however, the candour to own, that this was an iron age, barren of all goodness; a leaden age, abounding in all wickedness; and a dark age, remarkable above all others for the scarcity of writers, and men of learning.* "Christ was then, as it appears, in a very deep sleep, when the ship was covered with waves; and what seemed worse, when the Lord was thus asleep, there were no disciples, who by their cries, might awaken him, being themselves all fast asleep." Under an allusion by no means incongruous with the oriental and scriptural taste, this writer represents the Divine Head of the Church as having given up the Church, for its wickedness, to a judicial impenitency, which continued the longer, because there was scarcely any zealous spirits who had the charity to pray for the cause of God upon earth. I give this serious and devotional sense to Baronius, because the words will bear it without the least violence, and the phraseology is perfectly scriptural.†

Infidel malice has with pleasure recorded the vices and the crimes of the popes of this century. Nor is it my intention to attempt to palliate the account of their wickedness. It was as deep and as atrocious as language can paint; nor can a reasonable man desire more authentic evidence of history, than that, which the records both of civil and ecclesiastical history afford, concerning the corruption of the whole church. One pleasing circumstance, however, occurs to the mind of a genuine Christian; which is, that all this was predicted. The Book of the Revelation may justly be called a prophetic history of these transactions, and the truth of Scripture is vindicated by events

of all others the most disagreeable to a pious mind.

What materials then appear for the history of the real Church? The propagation of the Gospel among the Pagan nations, and the review of some writers of this century, form the principal materials, and shall be the subjects of two distinct chapters. But the general description of the situation of the Church, can be little else than a very succinct enumeration of the means made use of to oppose the progress of popery.

The decrees of the council of Frankfurt against image-worship had still some influence in Germany, France, and Eng-

land. In the year 909, a council was held at Trosle, a village near Soissons in France, in which they expressed their sentiments of Christian faith and practice, without any mixture

A council
at Frank-
fort,

A. D. 909.

of doctrine that was peculiarly popish. Many Churches still had the Scriptures in the vulgar tongue. The monks took much pains in our island to erect an independent dominion on the ruin of the secular clergy. This scheme, equally destructive of civil and clerical authority, met, however, with a vigorous, and, in a great measure, a successful resistance; and the celibacy of the clergy was strongly opposed. Even the doctrine of transubstantiation itself, the favourite child of Pascasius Radbert, was still denied by many, and could not as yet gain a firm and legal establishment in Europe. Alfrie, in England, whose homily for Easter used to be read in the Churches, undertook to prove, that the elements were the body and blood of Christ, not corporeally, but spiritually. In an epistle he asserts, that this sacrifice is not made his body, in which he suffered for us, nor his blood, which he shed for us, but is spiritually made his body and blood, as was the case with the manna which rained from heaven, and with the water which flowed from the rock. Opposition was also made by kings and councils to the authority of the pope. One of the most remarkable instances of this kind took place in the council of

* Baron. Annal.

† As for instance, Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Ps. xliv. 23.

Rheims, which deposed a bishop without the consent of the pope. The story is tedious and uninteresting. I have looked over the acts of the synod, which are circumstantially detailed by the Centuriators in their history of this century; and a few words of the discourse of Arnulph, bishop of Orleans, the president, may deserve to be distinctly quoted.* "O deplorable Rome, who in the days of our forefathers producedst so many burning and shining lights, thou hadst brought forth, in our times, only dismal darkness, worthy of the detestation of posterity: What shall we do, or what counsel shall we take? The Gospel telle us of a barren fig-tree, and of the divine patience exercised toward it. Let us bear with our primates as long as we can; and, in the mean time, seek for spiritual food, where it is to be found. Certainly there are some in this holy assembly, who can testify, that in Belgium and Germany, both which are near us, there may be found real pastors and eminent men in religion. Far better would it be, if the animosities of kings did not prevent that we should seek, in those parts, for the judgment of bishops, than in that venal city, which weighs all decrees by the quantity of money.—What think you, reverend fathers, of this man, the pope, placed on a lofty throne, shining in purple and gold? whom do you account him? If destitute of love, and puffed up with the pride of knowledge only, he is Antichrist sitting in the temple of God."†

It is always a pleasing speculation to a thinking mind, to observe the ebullitions of good sense, and a vigorous understanding, exerted in disadvantageous circumstances. It should be still more pleasing to observe them, when they are under the conduct of humble piety, as it may be presumed was the case in this instance of Arnulphus. We see here even Luther and Cranmer in embryo. The zealous and intelligent Frenchman laments, that the kings of the earth were committing fornication with the Roman harlot, and giving their power to support

her grandeur. He cast his eyes toward the Netherlands and Germany, which appear to have had, at that time, a degree of light and purity unknown at Rome: he eagerly wishes to oppose this light and purity to the darkness and the profligacy of Rome. Like Luther, he is fearful of throwing all things into confusion by hasty and precipitate methods: and, like Cranmer, in the case of Henry VIII.'s divorce, he wishes to appeal to the unprejudiced judgment of men more learned and more virtuous, than any to be found at Rome, against the scandalous oppressions of that venal city. That which Arnulphus conceived so judiciously, in an age the most unfavourable to reformation, Luther in Germany, and Cranmer in England, afterward effected. It is not, however, to be supposed, that even those magnanimous struggles for Christian light and liberty were in vain. The Spirit of God was evidently still with the reformed churches of Germany and the North; and France itself was by no means destitute of men who feared God, and served him in the Gospel of his Son.

There is an ultimate point of depression in morals, below which the common sense of mankind and the interests of society will not permit the scandalous profligacy of governors, whether secular or ecclesiastic, to descend. The Church of Rome had sunk to this point in the present century. Not only moral virtue itself, but even the appearance of it, was lost in the metropolis: and the Church, now trampled on by the most worthless prelates, and immersed in profligacy, sensuality, and lewdness, called for the heading aid of the civil magistrate. Otho I. emperor of Germany, came to Rome: and, by the united powers of the civil and the military sword, reduced that capital into some degree of order and decorum. He put an end to the irregular and infamous customs of intruding into the papedom, and confirmed to himself and his successors the right of choosing the supreme pontiff in future. The consequence was, that a greater degree of moral decorum began to prevail in the papacy, though matter of fact, evinces but too plainly, that religious principle was still as much wanting as ever. The effect of Otho's regulations was, that the popes exchanged the vices of the rake and the debauchee, for those of the ambitious politician and the hypocrite; and gradually

* Bishop Newton, in his 3d Vol. p. 161, on the Prophecies, of whom I have made some use in a few foregoing sentences, assigns the acts of the synod which I have mentioned to Arnulphus.

† 2 Thess. ii.

recovered, by a prudent conduct, the domineering ascendancy, which had been lost by vicious excesses. But this did not begin to take place till the latter end of the eleventh century. If a very moderate degree of Christian knowledge had obtained, during Otho's time, in the Christian world, the farce of St. Peter's dominion at Rome by his successors, would have been at an end. But there arose no Claudius of Turin in this century. The little specimen of the eloquence of Arnulphus, which has been mentioned, was the only effort I can find, which was made to stem the torrent of Roman tyranny. The whole western world, with Otho at its head, an emperor of upright intentions, and of shining endowments, agreed to reverence that See as supreme, which had laboured as it were, by the most infamous practices, to degrade itself, and to convince mankind, that it could not possibly be of divine appointment. The popes were rebuked, condemned, and punished; but the papedom was revered as much as ever. God had put in the hearts of princes to fulfil his will; and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the "Beast," until the words of God should be fulfilled.* The Roman prelates, convinced of the necessity of more caution and decorum in the use of their power, recovered by political artifice what they had lost, and became, in the issue, more terrible and more pernicious in the exercise of their power than ever. The neglect of so favourable an opportunity for emancipating the Church from religious slavery, is the highest proof of the extreme ignorance of these times, and deserved to be noticed.

This was an age of great political revolutions. The choice of the German emperor was restricted to certain electors, with whom it continues to the present time. The empire had, indeed, been entirely separated from the French monarchy, in the latter end of the foregoing century. But, in this, the great Otho more firmly fixed the imperial crown, in the name and nation of Germany. He himself was sprung from the dukes of Saxony; and deserved much of all Europe for his memorable victory over the Turks, by which the same restraint was laid on their inroads into Germany, as had been laid in France on the

inroads of the Saracens into that kingdom, by the victorious arms of Charles Martel, the grandfather of Charlemagne. The Turks were a fierce and valiant nation, who inhabited the coast of the Caspian sea, and who were let loose on mankind as a just providential scourge, on account of the contempt of divine truth, and the overflowing torrent of iniquity which had pervaded Christendom. They gradually superseded the Saracens, and seized their power and empire; but no great alteration took place in the civil situation of the East or the West on that account. For the Turks universally embraced Mahometanism, the religion of the vanquished; and with that the hatred of the Saracens to the Christian name; nor have they to this day acquired either politeness or science to such a degree as might mitigate their ferocity.

In all this disastrous period, I find scarcely any prince, except Otho, actuated with a spirit of religious zeal: indeed, his two successors of the same name, inherited some portion of his talents and virtues. The efforts of Otho to purify the Church, to promote learning, to erect bishoprics, to endow churches, and to propagate the Gospel among the barbarous nations, were highly laudable. And so steady and sincere were his exertions of this nature, and so amiable was his private life, that I cannot but hope, that he was himself a real Christian. His empress, Adelaide, was no less remarkable for her zeal and liberality. But I scarcely need to say, that the reigning ignorance, superstition, and wickedness, defeated, or abused their well-meant designs; those alone excepted, which regarded the propagation of the Gospel among the Pagans.

In the west the Normans, in the east the Turks, committed the most dreadful outrages on the Church. In our own island I find nothing, in all this period, but ignorance, superstition, and the ravages of northern barbarians. The state of France was not much different: the latter kings of the house of Charlemagne were dwindled into ciphers; and, toward the close of the century, the third race of French kings began in the person of Hugh Capet. This prince was himself by no means so renowned as Clovis and Charlemagne, the heads of the first and second race; but his posterity remained on the throne for a much longer series of years than that of the two former, though

* Rev. xviii. 17.

the name of Capet was almost forgotten in the world. It has, however, been rendered familiar to our ears of late, by a series of transactions, which have issued in the ruin of that house, and in the exhibition of scenes, which have equally outraged every principle of religion, honour, and humanity.

CHAPTER II.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS CENTURY.

THE Hungarians had received some ideas of Christianity in the time of Charlemagne. But, on his decease, they relapsed into the idolatry of their fathers, and the Christian name was almost extinguished among them. Nor is it probable, that they had ever been much instructed in the real Gospel of Christ. But toward the middle of this century, two Hungarian chiefs, whose governments lay on the banks of the Danube, made profession of Christianity; and were baptized at Constantinople. These two leaders were called Bologudes and Gyus. The former soon apostatized; the latter persevered, received instruction from Hierotheus, a bishop, who had accompanied him from Constantinople; and encouraged the labours of the same bishop among his subjects. The efforts proved salutary to the Hungarian nation: Sarula, the daughter of Gyus, was given in marriage to Geyza, the chief prince of Hungary. She prevailed on her husband to receive Christianity, and the Gospel was once more introduced into a country through the zealous piety of a woman. Geyza, however, still retained much inclination to the idolatry of his fathers, though his conversations with Christian captives and missionaries made a strong impression on his mind; but he was prevented from apostatizing, by the zeal and authority of Adalbert, archbishop of Prague, who visited Hungary toward the conclusion of this century. Whether the king's conversion was real or nominal, the most salutary consequences attended the reception of the Gospel by his subjects. Humanity, peace and civilization began to flourish among a people hitherto fierce and barbarous in the extreme. Stephen, the son of Geyza, was baptized by Adalbert;

and became a more decisive defender of the faith than his father had been. Under Stephen, Hungary was almost wholly evangelized; and nothing was omitted by this zealous prince to establish Christianity throughout his dominions. There is every reason to believe that many real conversions took place, though I can give no particular account of them.

But Adalbert has been mentioned; and it will be proper to give the reader a short sketch of the life of that extraordinary personage.* He was born in 956, and ordained by Diethmar, archbishop of Prague.

Adalbert born,

A. D. 956.

He beheld this same archbishop dying in terrible agonies of conscience, on account of his neglect of pastoral duty, and his secular avarice. Adalbert was appointed his successor; but with so little satisfaction to himself, that he was never seen to smile afterwards. Being asked the reason, he said, "It is an easy thing to wear a mitre and a cross, but an awful thing to give an account of a bishopric before the Judge of quick and dead." Bohemia, the scene of his diocese, was covered with idolatry: there were Christians, indeed, in that country, but chiefly nominal ones. In vain did the pious archbishop endeavour to reform the evils and abuses. The people undesignedly gave the noblest testimony to his sincerity, when they observed, that it was impossible for him and them to have communion with each other, because of the perfect opposition of life and conversation. Adalbert sighing over the wretched objects of his charge, and still willing to labour in the best of causes, travelled as a missionary into Poland, and planted the Gospel in Danzig. Here his labours seem to have been crowned with good success. In visiting a small island he was knocked down with the oar of a boat: however, recovering himself, he made his escape, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer for the name of Christ, and with his fellow-labourers quitted the place. Indeed he was forced to flee for his life: and, at length, was murdered by barbarians in Lithuania; or, as some think, in Prussia, about the year 997. Siggis, a pagan priest, was the principal instrument of his death. He is commonly styled the apostle

Murdered by barbarians.

A. D. 997.

* Alban Butler's *Saints Lives*, Vol. IV.

of Prussia,* though he only evangelized the city of Dantzic, which is in the neighbourhood of that country. Such was Adalbert :—and so small is the account transmitted to us, of one of the wisest and best of men, whom God had raised up for the instruction of the species,—a man willing to labour and to suffer for Christ!

Wolfgang, bishop of Ratisbon, may properly accompany Adalbert, who had received his bishopric of Prague, in consequence of Wolfgang's having vacated part of his diocese for that purpose. The latter

Wolfgang
bishop of
Ratisbon.

was a native of Sambia, and was brought up at a school in Wurtzburg. His experience gave him an opportunity of seeing, that professors of wisdom may even be greater slaves to pride and envy than the illiterate. Wearied with the view of scholastic strifes, he sighed for solitude, but was engaged to attend Henry, his friend, to Triers, who was there chosen archbishop. Wolfgang there taught children, and was dean of a community of ecclesiastics. In 972,

Preaches
in Hun-
gary.

A. D. 972.

he went to preach in Hungary, but had no great success. He was afterwards appointed bishop of Ratisbon: there he reformed the clergy, and was indefatigable in preaching twenty-two years. Henry, duke of Bavaria, placed under him his four children, Henry, afterwards emperor,—Gisela, queen of Hungary,—Bruno, bishop of Augsburg,—and

Dies,

A. D. 994.

Brigit, abbess of Ratisbon, all eminent characters. Wolfgang died in 994.†

The Gospel planted in Brandenburg,

A. D. 928.

The labours of Gerard, bishop of Toul in Germany, also deserve to be mentioned. He was himself an eminent preacher; and often commissioned zealous pastors to preach in country parishes. He cultivated learning among his disciples;‡ but at the same

time took care, so far as it lay in his power, that they should apply themselves to devotion. That he would be very earnest in these pious efforts will admit of no doubt, if it be true, that he declared, that he found more delight in heavenly exercises during one moment, than a worldly soul finds in worldly pleasures for a thousand years.*

If we look into Scandinavia, we find that the work of God, which had begun so prosperously in the last century, by the labours of Anscarus, had met with a severe check in Denmark, whose king, Gormo the 3d,† laboured to extirpate the Gospel there entirely. His queen Tyra, however, openly professed it, and gave it all the support which she was enabled to do, under great disadvantages. But the power and influence of the king prevailed, and most of his subjects returned to idolatry. At length Henry I. called the Fowler, the predecessor of the great Otho, led an army into Denmark; and, through the terror of his arms, obliged Gormo to promise submission to the commands of the emperor. Under the protection of this last prince, Unni, then archbishop of Hamburg, with some faithful labourers, came into Denmark, and brought over many to the profession of Divine truth; but Gormo himself remained inflexible. Harold, the son of Gormo, however, received the word with respect: for his mother Tyra by her instructions had, at least, removed all prejudice from his mind. Unni, with the consent of Gormo, visited the islands, and formed Christian churches among them. The king himself was allowed by his conqueror Henry, to choose, whether he would receive Christianity, or reject it; but was prohibited from persecuting the faith, in his dominions: and thus, by a singular concurrence of circumstances, a sovereign prince was, by a foreign power, prevented from committing that evil among his subjects, to which his own inclination would have led him. I cannot vindicate the imperious proceedings of Henry; the labours of Unni were, however, highly laudable, and Providence smiled on his benevolent views in propagating truth and holiness.

Unni, animated with success, determined to follow the pattern of Anscarus, and to visit the kingdom of Sweden. He

* Mosheim, Cent. XI. chap. I.

† Butler, X.

‡ Memoirs of the House of Brandenburg, by the late king of Prussia.

* Butler, IV.

† Centuriat. cent. x. Mosheim, cent. x. c. 1.

entered the Baltic, and arrived at Birca: there he found that the Gospel had been extinct: for seventy years, no bishop had appeared among them, except Reimbert, the successor of Ansgarius. There probably were, however, some souls then alive, who had heard the Gospel with joy in former times; and it pleased God to give large success to the ministry of Uusi. He

Uusi,
Arch-
bishop of
Hamburg,
fixed the
Gospel in
Sweden;
and died,
A. D. 936.

fixed the Gospel in Sweden, and planted it even in the remoter parts of that northern region. At length, he finished his glorious course at Birca, in the year 936. The savage disposition of the princes, and the confusion of the times, had tended to obli-

terate the traces of Ansgarius's labours: but, at length, Erfe, the eighth king of Sweden, and still more his son and successor, Olaus the second, favoured the propagation of the Gospel.

The former of these princes requested the archbishop of Bremen to supply his kingdom with missionaries. The archbishop sent him two persons of knowledge, piety, and integrity, Adalvard and Stephen. They laboured with much success for a time; but the natural enmity of depraved mankind will exert itself against true piety, whatever be the form of government under which men live. The natives of Sweden were enraged to find their licentiousness of manners so restrained; and they commenced a religious persecution against both the missionaries and the king. The former were beaten with rods, and expelled from Upsal: the latter was murdered on account of his piety. His son and successor Olaus was not discouraged from cherishing Christianity; and his zeal and piety were crowned with success.*

Thus were Sweden and Denmark, after a variety of changes, reduced into subjection to the form, and, no doubt, many individuals to the power of the Gospel. In the latter country, after the death of Henry I. the inhabitants refused to pay tribute to Otto the Great, his successor. This measure obliged them to submit; and required Harald, the son and successor of Gorm, to receive Christian baptism. All that we know of this prince, inclines me to believe, that there was no reluctance on his part. He was baptized, together with his wife and little son,

whose name had been Sueno; and, in honour of the emperor he was now called Suen-Otho. Harald, during his whole life, took every wise and salutary method to propagate divine truth among his subjects, and to restrain vice and immorality. Nor is it much to be doubted, that he would instruct his son Suen-Otho to act in the same manner; and labour to impress on his mind the power of that divine religion, which he himself seems to have felt. Be that as it may, Suen-Otho formed a junction with the chiefs of the country, who were offended at the pious zeal of Harald: in consequence of which, the latter was murdered: and Suen-Otho, renouncing even the name, which had been imposed upon him, persecuted the Christians with great cruelty; and, for a time, gave a predominancy to the Pagan interest in his dominions. It is remarkable, however, that, like another Manasseh, in his affliction he knew that the Lord was God. Being expelled from his throne, and forced to live in exile among the Scots, he was induced to remember the lessons of his childhood: he repented of his crimes; and, being restored to his throne, like the same Manasseh he laboured to destroy the idolatry which he had supported, and, in the latter part of his life, trode in the steps of his father.

In this century, the light of the Gospel penetrated into Norway.* About the year 912, an English missionary, named

Bernard, attempted to plant the doctrine of Christ in this barbarous region. Olaus, the king, listened to his discourses, and professed himself to be a convert; but he still attended to omens and Gentile superstitions. All the arguments of Bernard were ineffectual to cure him of his inveterate propensities; whence he was more a disgrace than an ornament to his profession.

About the year 933, another king, called Hagen, who had been educated among the English, employed certain missionaries of that nation to instruct his subjects, but the Norwegians persisted in their idolatry; and his successor Grimfeldt, pursued the same plan but without effect. Several successive princes laboured in the same cause, with the same ill success. The form of a government established in

The Gospel carried into Norway by an English missionary.

A. D. 912.

Other missionaries,

A. D. 933.

* Cent. Magd. cent. x.

* Centuriat. cent. x. Mosheim, cent. x. ch. 1.

any country, seems from experience to have been of no capital moment, in regard to the success of Christian missions. Despotism, limited monarchy, and republicanism, have each been serviceable or detrimental in the cause; and to associate strongly any one of these forms with the progress of the Gospel, is perhaps, forming an imagination of an alliance between Church and state that has no solid foundation in nature. We see, in the case before us, that a republican form would have proved destructive to the best of causes. It is to the effusion of the Holy Spirit, directing subordinate causes, and, independently of mere human politics, that the success of the Gospel is ever to be ascribed. At length, Haco, king of Norway, being driven from his throne, on account of his tyrannical government, having himself also persecuted the Christians in Norway, and having put himself under the protection of that same Harald of Denmark, whom we have already celebrated, became a patron of Christianity among his people. For Harald both instructed him in the nature of Christianity, and restored him to his dominions. Haco, humbled and enlightened, recommended the Gospel in an assembly

A. D. 945. of the people, in the year 945.

His zeal and solemnity were very striking; but the fierce and barbarous people were not much moved; and the remembrance of his former ill conduct would naturally prejudice their minds against his arguments. Olaus, who reigned sometime after, was the most successful of all the Norwegian princes in recommending Christianity. At length, Swein, king of Denmark, having made himself master of Norway, obliged his subjects universally to renounce their gods, and profess the Gospel. Doubtless many compulsory methods were used by several, probably by all these princes, by no means agreeable to the genius of the Gospel. Their intentions, however, seem laudable; and at least the zealous labours of the missionaries deserve to be noticed. Among these, Guthebold, an English pastor, was most eminent. The idol Thor was dragged from its place, and publicly burnt in the sight of its worshippers. In fact, Norway, in the form of its religion, became Christian throughout. The Orkney islands, then subject to the Norwegian crown, received the light of the Gospel, which, in some degree, penetrated also into Iceland, and

Greenland; and, in this century, the triumph of Christianity was complete throughout all Scandinavia.

The labours of Adelbert, the first archbishop of Magdeburg, deserve to be mentioned in this place. The Rugi, about the year 960, entreated the emperor Otho I. to send them a Christian bishop. This people lived in Pomerania, between the Oder and the Wipper, and in the isle of Rugen in the Baltic. The town of Rugenwald still bears their name. They were a remarkably savage race, and had a famous temple in Rugen. Certain monks of the mission-seminary of new Corbie, had formerly laboured with success, in various provinces of the Selavi or Slavonians, and in the whole isle of Rugen, the Rugi being a tribe of the Selavi. An oratory was erected in the isle, in honour of Christ, and in memory of St. Vitus, patron of new Corbie. But the savage people soon relapsed; and making Vitus the chief of their gods, erected to him a temple and idol with sacrifices, permitting no merchant to buy or sell there who did not first give some offering for their sacrifices, or for the temple of their god, whom they now called Swantewith. "Thus," says Helmodus, "the man whom we confess a martyr and servant of Christ, they adore as god, a creature for the Creator; nor is there any nation, who so much abhors Christians, especially pastors." A memorable caution for teachers to beware lest their instructions of the heathen may only lead them from one species of idolatry to another. However, at their desire, Otho I. sent Adelbert to the isle. But the people were hardened: several of his fellow-preachers were murdered, though he himself escaped. This fruitless mission was in 961.

Mission, Adelbert was afterwards, in **A. D. 961.** 970, appointed archbishop of Magdeburg, where Adelaide the empress, and widow of Otho I. passed the greatest part of her time, and gave herself up very much to his directions: she had gone through a great variety of prosperity and adversity, and was very pious and exemplary. Adelbert was an instrument of converting great numbers of the Selavi: he supplied his diocese with able pastors for the new converts, and died in 982, having very laudably ruled the Church for twelve years.*

Adelbert
dies,
A. D. 982.

* Butler, XII.

In the preceding century, Rollo, a Norwegian pirate, at the head of a valiant and lawless band of soldiers, who are commonly called Normans, invaded and ravaged France. But in the

Rollo professes the Christian religion.

A. D. 912.

year 912, Charles the Simple, a monarch ill calculated to withstand so powerful an enemy, purchased a peace, by investing Rollo with the dukedom of Normandy, and by giving him his daughter Gisela in marriage, on condition that he should embrace Christianity. All religions were equally indifferent to Rollo and his followers: they therefore professed the Gospel without the least hesitation. It seemed proper to notice this event, as introducing the famous line of Norman dukes into France, whose history, in process of time, involves so much both of French and English history. As for the rest, I know of no evidence of an effusion of the Divine Spirit which attended their reception of Christianity. The Normans, however, gradually became better members of society; and at length began to patronize, in some form or other, something that bore the appearance of more serious religion.

While the nations, who had long enjoyed the forms of true religion, were slumbering in superstitions, or wallowing in gross wickedness, the Head of the Church, in his providence, still reserved to himself a costly seed; and, by their labours, extended the pale of the Gospel. Poland had hitherto remained in the thickest night of ignorance, and both an inland situation and a barbarous neighbourhood seemed to exclude it from the light of divine truth. Some Poles, however, traveling into Bohemia* and Moravia, on account of business, were struck with what they heard concerning Christianity: they listened to the ministry of the Word of God, and received it gladly. Returning home, they every where recommended to their countrymen the grace of the Gospel. Moreover, foreigners often visiting Poland, on account of trade, preached Christ as they were able, to the Poles. Something divinely excellent appeared to be in Christianity; and the happy infection spread from heart to heart. It reached, at length, Mieslaus, the king or duke of Poland; who divorced his seven wives, with whom he had coha-

bited, and married Dambrona, the daughter of Boleslaus, the duke of Bohemia.

He was baptized in the year 966; and, by the pious and charitable instructions of his new spouse, was induced to exert his authority in the pro-

The king of Poland baptized, A. D. 966.

pagation of the Gospel through his dominions: in fine, Poland became a Christian nation; nor is it probable that this was a mere outward profession: that it was so in certain respects, there is no doubt; but nevertheless, the circumstances of the narrative carry the appearance of something truly divine. Nor is that true, which Mosheim* asserts, that an inward change of affections and principles was far from being an object of attention in this barbarous age. It seems most probable, that it was an object of attention in the missionaries, and in those who zealously received them. We have seen, in several instances, an evidence of zeal in preaching, and a constancy in suffering, which can scarcely be explained on any other principle than that of godly sincerity. And we have lived to see a refined age as indifferent concerning an inward change as any barbarous period whatever.

In the year 955, Olga, the queen of Russia, sailed from Kiow to Constantinople, and received baptism, together with her attendants. On her return, she persevered in the Christian religion, but could not prevail on her family and subjects, to receive the same:

The queen of Russia sails to Constantinople, and is there baptized, A. D. 955.

the Greek missionaries, however, laboured still, and gradually succeeded.† At length Wolodimir, her grandson, in the year 981, married Anna, sister of the emperor Basil, who, by her zealous importunity, prevailed on her spouse to receive Christianity. He was

Russia becomes Christian, A. D. 987.

baptized in the year 987; and from that time, Russia received a Christian establishment, and has ever since considered herself as a daughter of the Greek Church.

Ulric, son of Count Hucbald, born in 893, was placed at Augsburg under the care of Adalberon, bishop of that city. He was made, at length, bishop of Augsburg, by the emperor, Henry the Fowler.

Ulric, bishop of Augsburg.

* Cent. Magd.

* Chap. I. Cent. X. † Gibbon, Vol. V.

laboured in his diocese for 50 years: dies,

A. D. 973.

pastoral labours. He died about 973.

Thus, in an age of proverbial darkness, that illustrious prophecy continued to receive its accomplishment; "Kings, shall be thy nursing fathers, and queens thy nursing mothers."^a The regular and civilized governments in the world sustained such dreadful calamities from the irruption of Pagan nations, on all sides, that their encouragement of Christian missions was equally humane and prudent. The precepts of the Gospel only were found effectual to meliorate the dispositions of barbarians; and under the influence of the Holy Spirit, no doubt, this was the happy effect on the minds of many.—But, it will still be said, "the conversion of a great number was only nominal, and compulsory methods were employed, which are by no means adapted to the genius of the Gospel." It must be allowed, that the latter of these assertions is strictly true, and the former, in many instances, but by no means in all. The efforts of the tenth of the three preceding centuries, to extend Christianity, had their blemishes, which have been malignantly insisted on, and even exaggerated by modern writers. Defective, however, as these efforts were, they form the principal glory of those times; and, partly by evident proofs and a detail of circumstances, and partly by analogy and the nature of things, they appear to have been attended with the effusion of the Divine Spirit, the genuine conversion of numbers, and the improvement of human society. The virtues of many at least, of the missionaries, are above any encomium which I can give; though they were born in rude ages, and are consigned to contempt and oblivion by polite historians, who lavish all their praises on heroes and politicians. If, however, the labours of an obscure individual may attract the attention of the public, the names of Boniface, Anscarius, Adelbert, Unni, and others of the same class, shall be honoured among men, and the work of propagating the Gospel shall appear laudable in an extreme degree. It must appear so to all, who desire that the name

of Jesus should be honoured through the earth, and that the power of his grace should be felt in every place, and in every heart. But to what lengths will not scepticism proceed? It has even been advanced, that the attempt to propagate Christianity, without the consent of the government established in every country, is unlawful in its nature. A position so injurious to the character of many of the best and wisest men, whom it behooves us to celebrate in this history, and so conveniently favourable to the selfish, avaricious, indolent spirit of nominal Christians, will deserve to be investigated and exposed in its genuine colours.

CHAPTER III.

AN APOLOGY FOR CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.

THE commission which our Saviour gave to his Apostles, a little before his ascension, forms of itself the strongest apology for the practice of Christian missionaries in all ages. "Go ye, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."^a

It cannot be justly said, that this commission of evangelizing all nations is restricted to the Apostles, because He, who gave these directions, declares, He will always be with those who obey them to the end of the world. The commission is then as much in force at this day, as it was at the first age of Christianity; and will continue in force till time shall be no more. The promise of divine support, to encourage the missionaries in the prosecution of a work so arduous and so difficult, extends to all ages, and would be perfectly inapplicable to those ages, if any such there were, which should have no right to propagate the Gospel.

"Is every person then, calling himself a Christian, authorized to preach the Gospel among the heathen nations?" Not so: nor is every person called a Christian authorized to preach in Christian countries. Certain Qualifications and endowments, and above

Questions concerning missions.

^a Isaiah xlix.

^a Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

all, the real and genuine influence of the Holy Spirit, are necessary for this purpose. To define and to ascertain these in particular cases, enter not into the subject before us. Suffice it to say, that, however in point of prudence and expediency, it be proper to procure, is practicable, the consent and concurrence of the government of the country, which is the object of the mission, such consent and concurrence is not necessary as a legitimate qualification of a missionary, who should undertake to evangelize pagan countries. Our Lord well knew that such consent was not attainable in any country under heaven at the time in which he gave this commission. He mentions no such condition, nor did the Apostles conceive the necessity of such a license. It is well known, on the contrary, that they persisted in the mission, not only without, but also against the express prohibitions of all governments, whether Jewish or Gentile. The nature and reasonableness of Christianity itself is such, that, wherever it is fairly exhibited, in connexion with its proper proofs and evidences, those, who hear it, are bound in conscience to obey it, magistrates as well as others; and, as we have seen, the magistrate himself not only may, but ought to promote it, for the good of society.*

"But the Apostles wrought miracles; and therefore, though they had a right to propagate Christianity, others who do not so, have no right to preach, except with the consent of the government." It does not appear, that the evidence of their commission rested wholly on miracles, though it must be confessed these formed a striking part of it, and were afforded by Divine Providence, in order to facilitate the progress of the then infant religion. But if, what no serious Christian will deny, there is an internal evidence in the Gospel itself, which ought to weigh with every reasonable mind, abstracted from any thing miraculous, it will be the duty of every one to receive it, when fairly proposed; and the obedience due to divine revelation is binding not only on those who hear it from one who works miracles, but also on those who hear it from one who brings unexceptionable testimonies of miracles having been wrought by others in attestation of Christianity. Whoever attentively reads the history of

the Acts of the Apostles, and the historical parts of the Epistles, will find, that all ministers, regularly ordained,—for the case of self-ordained ministers I do not here consider,—thought it their duty to preach the word every where, whether they could work miracles or not. The miraculous powers were an adventitious circumstance; of great importance, indeed, in the opening of Christianity; but if the stress of an evangelical commission to the heathen had ever been meant to be laid upon it, it is surprising that this condition should never be mentioned in the sacred volume: it is not to be conceived, that the numberless missionaries in the apostolic ages should all have been ignorant of it. Besides, with the cessation of miracles, the work of promulgation must have probably ceased; whereas, it appears, that in the succeeding centuries, even to the tenth, missionaries still laboured; and, in a greater or less degree, the work prospered in their hand.

If the reflections have any weight, they show that it has been inconsiderately asserted, that civil governments alone have a right to determine, whether Christian missionaries shall preach the Gospel or not within their dominions. I have proved, I think, that they have a right to establish Christianity; but it does not follow that they have a right to exclude it. Right and wrong, in this case, have a higher foundation than human politics. Trajan might think himself justified in persecuting Christians, because they transgressed the Roman laws, which forbade the introduction of foreign religions. But Trajan ought to have known, that there is an authority in religion superior to any human constitutions whatever.

Though the authority of Scripture, the practice of the apostolic age, and the labours of the best and wisest of their successors, from age to age, seem, taken together, to form a sufficient apology for Christian missions at this day, yet we need not fear, in this cause, to appeal to the common sense of mankind. If a whole nation were afflicted with a pestilential disease, and a foreigner were in possession of a medicine, that might probably save many of their lives, it might be prudent, no doubt, for that foreigner to obtain an express license, if practicable, from the government, for affording medical aid to its subjects. But will any man say, that it would be wrong in him to endeavour to heal the diseased, if he

* See Chap. XVII. p. 343 of this Vol.

had an opportunity, and had the benevolence to attempt it though he had no formal sanction from the magistrate? To promote the welfare of our neighbours, is next to our duty to God, the most essential ingredient in the character of a good man. Is the express consent of the legislature necessary, antecedently to every office of mercy and humanity?—It is not necessary to say that the propagation of the Gospel is the most salutary and the most important of all works of charity. What then ought to be thought of him who would leave to the discretion of the magistrate the great office of labouring to win souls; and would charge with sin and employment of all others the most beneficent to mankind?

“Is not this to teach rebellion against lawful authority, and to countenance an undue interference with foreign governments?” Could this be proved, I should not know how to apologize for missionaries. For I scarcely know any thing more diametrically opposed to the genius of the Gospel than such a conduct. Let it be carefully observed, that our argument goes no farther than to justify a *passive* attempt to teach Christianity throughout the Globe. “If they persecute you in one city, flee ye into another,” is the rule of the Divine Author of Christianity. A missionary must be prepared to endure, not to inflict evil: he may expect opposition, and even death itself. He must patiently sustain his lot: he must forego not only all violence in attempting to propagate Christianity, but also all artifice and secular intrigues: he must not only forbear to disturb the government of the country, and to weaken men’s attachment to it, but he must do more: he must teach obedience to it, as an essential branch of Christianity itself, and an obedience too, “not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.” If his word is not received in one place, he must make experiment of another, in dependence on Divine Providence and grace. Meekness, patience, submission to civil authority must attend him in every step. Such were the apostolic missionaries; such in a good degree were the missionaries of the dark ages, which we are reviewing. And I am apt to think, that those, who object to missions in general, have had their eye on the political craft of the Jesuits, or the furious factions of enthusiasts. For I can scarcely believe we are grown so totally cal-

lous to every Christian sensation, as deliberately to condemn all missions conducted in the true spirit of the Gospel.

Do we expect that, according to numerous prophecies, the kingdom of Christ shall spread through all nations? And are no means to be employed to promote it?—Shall we complain of the want of universality in the best religion, and discourage every attempt to effect that universality? With what an ill grace do objectors to the propagation of the Gospel make such complaints? Are human efforts concerned in all other works of Divine Providence, and are they in this, the most important of all, to be excluded? Are we to sit still, and expect some sudden and miraculous providential interposition, and is this the only instance, in which Socinians, and men who call themselves rational Christians, will use no rational methods, in order to produce the most desirable effects? Or have we learned to despise the importance of Christianity itself, and do we think that the present comfort and future felicity of mankind are no way connected with the subject before us?

I propose these few questions, leaving the resolution of them to the consciences of those, who have had it in their power to encourage Christian missions in our times, and who have opposed them. To have been particularly active in extending the Redeemer’s kingdom forms no part of the glory of this country. Denmark, a poor impotent government, compared with ours, has, it is well known, effected in this way what may cause Britons to blush, and what should stir us up to virtuous emulation. With every advantage in our hands, for the propagation of the Gospel, we have done very little indeed, and the annals of the several dark ages we have reviewed, have exhibited a spirit of adventurous charity unknown to those, who now boast themselves as the most enlightened and the most philosophic of mankind.

CHAPTER IV.

WRITERS AND EMINENT MEN IN THIS CENTURY.

In a dearth so excessive, there are few, who deserve to be noticed either for knowledge or for piety; and fewer still

for both. My chief view, in this chapter, is to give the reader an idea of the state of true religion in these times; nor will the picture here exhibited be materially erroneous, though it could be proved, that Theophylact, one of the authors whom I shall quote, belonged to the next century, as Mosheim thinks. For the spirit and taste of the tenth and eleventh centuries are so similar, that what illustrates the one will illustrate the other. The very toleration of the Roman popedom itself, after the detection of its flagitiousness before all the world, evinces the uncommonly low condition of Christian knowledge in this age; proofs, however, will appear, that the Spirit of God had not forsaken the Church, and that there were those who revered and felt the power of her doctrines.

It is not in Rome, but in the more recent Churches, that this power appears. Whether it was practically exemplified by Bruno, archbishop of Cologne, in Germany, is not very evident. But, in knowledge and learning, he was
Character of Bruno, very eminent. He was brother to Otho I. and by the desire of the people of Cologne, was fixed by that great prince in the archbishopric.

We must not expect much regard to ecclesiastical discipline in these times; and therefore are not to be surprised, that a prince so religious as Otho was, should invest his relation also with the civil power of a dukedom. Bruno is remarked, however, to have been among the first who united offices so discordant in the same person.* This was to secularize the Church, and Cologne continues in a similar state to this day. Bruno was nevertheless an assiduous promoter of religion. Nathanael, Daniel, and various others, who travelled in his province, he brought over to the profession of Christianity. He restrained the luxury both of clergy and people; and was himself a shining example of

modest and frugal manners. He died about the year 965.

Utt, a far more decided character, has been already celebrated. As archbishop of Hamburg, he acted with a vigour and a piety worthy the importance of that See. He was highly revered by the German emperors of his time; and that a person so opulent should choose to labour as a

missionary in such countries as Denmark and Sweden, argues a zeal of no common degree. He died at Stockholm in 936.*

By the advice of Adalvard, bishop of Verden, Adeldagus, who had discharged some petty office in the Church, was sent for to court by Otho the Great, and made his chancellor. On the death of Utt, he was appointed archbishop of Hamburg, but was so acceptable, by his talents and industry, to the emperor, that he still continued in the same secular employments. Adeldagus sent a

number of pastors into Denmark, and was present with Otho at Rome when the popedom was reformed. His flock at Hamburg complained, and not without reason, of his absence from them. The emperor at length gave him liberty to return home. His care of the poor, and many rather princely than pastoral virtues, were remarkable. But I can form no great idea of the spirituality of a man, who neglects residence among his flock, and continues to act in a secular capacity under three successive princes, while he holds a bishopric. He served Otho II. and III. with the same success and ability with which he had done Otho I. and after he had held his bishopric 53 years, he died under Otho III. in the year 988.†

Libentius, an Italian, by the desire of Adeldagus, was appointed his successor. Much is said in praise of this prelate. He often visited the Vandals, a barbarous people in Poland, about the Vistula, and taught them the way of salvation. He sent pastors to distant nations, and was a shining exemplar of piety and benevolence. He died in

1013.‡

Adalvard, bishop of Verden, who, as we have mentioned, recommended Adeldagus to the patronage of Otho I. was himself an excellent pattern of piety and activity. He discharged the office of a faithful pastor in his diocese, and took pains to instruct the ignorant Vandals in the way of salvation.§

Of Adalbert, archbishop of Prague, I can find no more than has been already

Death of Utt,
A. D. 936.

Brief account of Adeldagus: was bishop 53 years; died,
A. D. 988.

Libentius, a shining character, died,
A. D. 1013.

* Cent. Magd. cent. X. Vol. III.

Vol. I.

3 E

* Cent. Magd. cent. X. Vol. III.

† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ Ibid.

mentioned; though his labours deserve to have been minutely recorded.

That the true doctrines of the Gospel, and some true knowledge of their experimental use and power, were not lost in the Church altogether, the following quotations will abundantly evince; though of the authors themselves no particular account can be given, nor is it very clear at what exact period of time some of them lived: the passages selected from them will serve, however, to show the religious taste of the times.

Ansbert, speaking of the effect of the Divine Word, observes, "There is no doubt, but that by the holy preaching of the Word the faithful receive the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Lord bearing witness to this, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."^{*}

The value of the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit has been frequently attested in these memoirs, and in a language very similar to the following passage of Smaragdus on the same subject: "Our spiritual sense is renewed by the exercises of wisdom, meditation on the word of God, and the knowledge of his statutes; and the more proficiency any person daily makes by reading, and the deeper hold the truth has upon his understanding, the more the new man grows day by day.—Let no man attribute to the teacher, that which he understands from his mouth; for unless there be an INTERNAL TEACHER, the external one labours in vain. The Jews heard Christ preach in one manner, the Apostles in another; those to their condemnation, these to their salvation: for the Spirit taught these in the heart, what those heard outwardly by the ear.—Unless the Lord shine into the heart of the hearer, the teacher labours in darkness.—For the faith of the nations comes not by the wisdom of the composition, but by the gift of divine vocation."[†]

"If thou wouldst have thy sons obedient to thee," says Theophylact, "instruct them in the Divine Word. Say not, that it belongs only to persons professionally religious to read the Scriptures. It is the duty of every Christian, particularly of those who are in the midst of secular employments: they need the greatest help, as they live in a tempest. It is for thy own interest, that thy children be well versed in Scripture; thence

they will learn to reverence their parents." Let modern sceptics and infidels attend to the voice of a writer who lived in a dark age of the church; for he was a luminary of these dark ages. He most probably lived in the eleventh century; and the plain precepts just mentioned deserve, from us who live in the eighteenth, more serious attention than whole volumes of metaphysical subtleties, or political speculations.

Speaking of the state of man after the Fall, Theophylact observes: "Some are found, indeed, to be good tempered and benign by nature, none by exercise and meditation. And though some be reckoned good men, they adulterate every action by vain glory. But he, whose goodness centers in his own glory, not in goodness itself, whenever an opportunity offers, will indulge evil lusts. For, if among us Christians, the terrors of eternal condemnation, every advantage of study, and the lives of innumerable Saints, can scarcely preserve men in the practice of virtue, how can the nugatory tales of the Gentiles teach them virtue? It will not be matter of surprise, indeed, if they confirm them in wickedness."^{*}

With such discrimination of ideas did this writer distinguish between the state of nature and of grace! Let us hear him express his thoughts on the Gospel, as opposed to the law. "The law, if it detect any man sinning, even in a circumstance that may appear trifling, as in gathering sticks on the sabbath day,† condemns him to death: but the Holy Spirit, receiving those who have committed innumerable offences, in the laver of baptismal regeneration, justifies them, and quickens those who are dead in sin.—The righteousness of God preserves us; not our own righteousness: for what righteousness can we have, who are altogether corrupt? But God hath justified us, not by our works, but by faith, which grace ought to grow more and more consummate; as the Apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.‡ Truly it is not enough to have once believed. For, as the benefits of divine grace exceed human thoughts, there is absolute need of faith to conceive and apprehend them.—The righteousness of God is by faith. This needs not our labours and works;

* John vi. 63. Cent. Magd. Vol. III. p. 18.

† Cent. Magd. Vol. III. p. 18.

• Cent. Magd. Vol. III. p. 64.

† Numb. xv. 32, &c.

‡ Luke xvii. 5.

but the whole belongs to the grace of God. Moses asserts that man is justified by works.* But none are found to fulfil them. Justification by the law is therefore rendered impossible. This is the righteousness of God, when a man is justified by grace, so that no blemish, no spot is found in him.†

* *Maxime Trucorum ductor, quo cospice
Res equidem Troje victas aut regna fatebor.*

So speaks Evander to Virgil's hero. With great propriety may we say of justification by Christ through faith, the leading doctrine of Christianity, that while its existence is preserved in the Church, the power of Christ's kingdom is not destroyed in the world. There, doubtless, were those in Theophylact's time, who knew how to feed on the doctrine of grace, and convert it into spiritual nourishment. This writer, it should be observed, belonged to the eastern Church, of which we hear very little in the dark ages before us. Serious and humble spirits, therefore, in those regions, were not left without a light shining amidst the tenfold obscurity of the times, by which their feet might be guided in the paths of peace. And as it is not to be supposed, that the light was preserved to no purpose, we may safely conclude that the real Church was still in existence in the East.

The same intelligent writer gives us an illustration of the abundance of grace, spoken of in Rom. v. which deserves to be mentioned. "Suppose a person is thrown into prison with his wife and children, because he is deep in debt, and then should be not only freed from the prison and the demands of the law, but also receive at once innumerable talents, be introduced into the royal palace, be presented with a kingdom, and accounted worthy of the same, and be reckoned a son of the king;—This is the abundance of grace."‡

Hear how experimentally he speaks of Christian faith. "Faith is looked on as contemptible, because of the foolishness of preaching.—He, who believes with

great affection, extends his heart to God. He is united to him. His heart, inflamed, conceives a strong assurance, that it shall gain its desire. We all know this by experience, because Christ hath said, What-
ever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. He who believes, gives himself wholly to God, he speaks to him with tears; and in prayer holds the Lord, as it were, by the feet. O rich advantage, exceeding human thought, that every one who believes on him, gains two things, one that he does not perish, the other that he has eternal life.—The faith of Christ is a holy work, and sanctifies its possessor. It is a guide to every good work: for works without faith are dead, and so is faith without works.—There needs not the circuitous and afflictive course of legal works, but God justifies in a summary way those who believe. For, if thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.*—Faith is a shield, not vain sophisms, not fallacious argumentations. These hinder the soul, faith protects it.—Know, that thou must not exact a reason from God; but however he dispose of thee, thou must believe him.†

It would have been wonderful indeed, if the Grecian divine before us, had been exempt from the errors relating to the will, which for ages of greater light had pervaded the eastern Church. He appears to have mixed the powers of grace and nature in the confused manner of Chrysostom; but it is not necessary to quote any passage for this purpose. A specimen of his writings on this point may be seen in the 139th page, Vol. iii. Magd.

Giselbert, or a Theologian whose works bear that name, and who lived in or near this century, speaks of justification in the usual manner of Augustine, and of the later Latin fathers, and with the same valuable tincture of divine truth.—"When I speak of the righteousness of God," says he, "I do not mean his absolute righteousness, but that with which he clothes man, when he justifies the ungodly. The law and the prophets bear witness to this righteousness. The law, indeed, by commanding and threatening, and yet justifying no man, sufficiently indicates that man is justified by the gift of God, through the

* He appears to mean the same thing which St. Paul does, by the expression, "Moses describeth the righteousness, which is of the law, that the man, which doeth those things, shall live by them."—Rom. x. 5.

† Cent. Magd. l. d. p. 79.

‡ Id. p. 81.

* Rom. x.

† Cent. Magd. l. d. p. 83.

quickening Spirit.—From God, beyond question, arises the beginning of salvation, never from us, nor with us. But the consent and the work, though not originating from us, is, however, not without us.* Of the work of grace, and of the duty of man in sanctification, he seems to speak with evangelical accuracy. The only error is, that by speaking of justification, as effected through the quickening Spirit, he seems to confound justification with sanctification. A common mistake!—The great luminary of Africa fell into it; and, by his authority, gave it a sanction throughout the western Church. In another passage, Gisbert, by speaking of a variety of justifications, which he multiplies to seven, and, with equal reason, he might have multiplied them to seventy times seven,† tarnishes the precious doctrine of salvation exceedingly, and leaves no distinct ground for the afflicted conscience to seek peace with God. “The first remission is baptism; the seventh is by tears and confession.” Whenever men are brought to feel what sin is,—what their own sin is,—they should learn the Scripture-doctrine of justification, which is, from first to last, by grace alone through Jesus Christ, and by the instrumentality of faith. Careless and self-righteous spirits may trifle at their ease with other views of doctrine; the contrite spirit cannot rest but in Christ alone; and by the truth as it is in Jesus, the conscience finds peace, and the heart is set at liberty to serve God in love. However, a serious investigation of the doctrine of Christian righteousness, argues some just concern for the salvation of the soul, and often leads to the most salutary consequences. The worst state of the Church is, when a deep silence is preserved concerning justification in any mode or sense, however men’s minds may be amused or agitated with a variety of religious speculations or controversies. In that case, religion lives only in the brain, and has forsaken the conscience altogether.

But no writer of this age pierces more deeply into the spirit of divine truth, than the monk Radulph, who certainly flourished about the tenth century,‡ though very little is known concerning him.—“Since,” says he, “in every good work, divine mercy prevents us, if a man seek

what recompense he may render to the Lord, he finds it not unless he receive it also from God. Divine grace, therefore, obliges us by its beneficence, and helps us when thus obliged, by many repetitions of the same grace, that we may not remain ungrateful.”—“Since all are by nature children of wrath, and born under the yoke of diabolical slavery, there is no ground to expect that any persons, except those whom celestial clemency delivers, should of themselves choose to come out of the general mass of depravity. For it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”* And he adds more to the same purport, speaking very fully concerning the “election of grace,”† and connecting that doctrine with practical views of humility and gratitude.

Nilus, of Greek extraction, was born in the year 910, in Calabria. He was allowed to have lived in a state of eminent sanctity, though a married man; a singular circumstance for those times.

After his wife’s death he retired about the year 940 into a convent. In 976, the bishop of Calabria, and a lord of the territory, named Leo, with

many priests, went to visit him, rather with a view to try his skill than to derive any benefit from his instructions. Nilus treated them civilly, prayed with them a short time, and then put into Leo’s hands a book of maxims concerning the small number of the saved. The company expressed their dissatisfaction at the harshness of the doctrine. This induced Nilus to undertake the proof of it from the writings of the fathers, from St. Paul, and from the Gospels. “These maxims seem terrible,” says he, “but the only reason why they do so, is this, they condemn your practice. Unless you be sincerely holy, you cannot escape everlasting torments.” They sighed, and trembled. He had, however, said no more than what the whole New Testament inculcates continually. And the conduct of these men, and of men like these, who abound in

every age, shows how little the Scripture is really believed. One of the company, whom Nilus knew to live in open sin, asked the monk, whether Solomon was saved or not? What is it to us, answered

Nilus retires into a convent, A. D. 940.

Further account of Nilus, A. D. 976.

* Cent. Magd. Id. p. 79.
† Id. 363.

† Id. 139.

* Cent. Magd. p. 65.

† Rom. xi. 5.

the upright Nilus, whether Solomon be saved or not! It is sufficient for you to know, that Christ pronounces damnation against all workers of iniquity. I should think it a more interesting object of inquiry for you, to consider whether you shall be saved or not. As for Solomon, the Scripture mentions not his repentance, as it does that of Manasseh.—What effect this discourse had upon his visitors, we know not. But it deserved to be recorded, both to show how dangerously men exercise their ingenuity in furnishing themselves with excuses to live in sin, and also to give a sample of plain dealing in those who undertake to instruct mankind.

Euphraxus, a haughty nobleman, was governor of Calabria under the Greek emperor. For the eastern part of Italy remained subject to that monarch a considerable time after the establishment of the popedom. Euphraxus sought every occasion of mortifying Nilus, because he gave him no presents, as other abbots did. Falling sick, however, he sent for him, and begged of him the monastic habit. Your baptismal vows suffice, said Nilus. Repentance requires no new vows, but a change of heart and life. This sentiment of Nilus was somewhat extraordinary for the tenth century. But Euphraxus, who sought to pacify his conscience at the easiest rate, with miserable ignorance importuned the abbot to invest him with the habit, to which he at length consented. Euphraxus died three days after. Infidelity may smile, but if ever the conscience become thoroughly alarmed, even in the most hardened sceptics and sensualists, it will quickly find, that the best of our moral works are no covering to the soul from the justice of a holy God; and therefore, unless the real doctrine of salvation be under-

stood, men in their distress will betake themselves to such paltry refuges as this of Euphraxus. A licentious Charles II. anxiously flying to popish ceremonies, in his dying hours, is not a singular case. Others, who, like him, in health, despised the doctrines of grace, have done the same.

Nilus refused the offer of the bishopric of Capua: nor could the most flattering invitations induce him to go to Constantinople. He seemed likely to enjoy tranquil retirement to his death, in his convent. But Providence ordered it otherwise. The Saracens invaded Calabria, of which they afterwards gained possession. Nilus was driven from his home, and lived a long time in other convents. Otho III. upon a visit, pressed him to accept some situation in his dominions, wherever he should choose. Nilus thanked the emperor, but said, our Divine Master will not forsake my brethren, if they be true monks, after I am gone. Ask what you please, said the emperor, I will give it you with pleasure. "The only thing I ask you," replied Nilus, "is, that you would save your soul. For you must give an account to God as well as other men." This good abbot died at Tusculum, in an extreme old age in the year 1005.^a

Such was the light, scattered here and there, in the darkness of the times, by which the God of grace and mercy called, nourished, and sanctified his Church, and preserved to himself a godly seed in the earth, who should serve him in the Gospel of his Son, and prevent the cruel tyranny of the prince of darkness from completely overspreading the world.

^a A. Butler.

CENTURY XI.

CHAPTER I.

A GENERAL VIEW OF THE CHURCH IN
THIS CENTURY.

THE genuine Church of Christ, under the protection and influence of her Supreme Head, existed indeed in this century; but it would be in vain to attempt a regular and systematical history of her progress. Some particular circumstances in different parts of the Christian world, some pious and successful endeavours to propagate the Gospel in pagan countries, some degrees of opposition to the reigning idolatry and superstition, and the writings of some pious and evangelical Theologians, demonstrated that the Spirit of God had not forsaken the earth altogether.

Indeed, if this century may be said, in some degree, to have excelled the last, the superiority must be ascribed to the improvements of learning. For the arts and sciences revived, in a measure, among the clergy and the monks, though not cultivated* by any other set of men. I speak in regard to the western Church; for the eastern, enfeebled and oppressed by the Turks and Saracens from without, and by civil broils and factions from within, with difficulty preserved that degree of knowledge, which in those degenerate days still remained among the Greeks. I scarcely find any vestiges of Christian piety among the eastern Christians at this time: indeed, the attentive reader must have observed how barren of that sort of events, which relate to Christian history, Asia in general had been for some ages. So fatal was the influence of Mahometanism, and so judicially hardened were the descendants of those, who first had honoured the religion of Jesus. Constantinople was still called a Christian city, and, in learning and politeness, was superior to any part of the West: but it is in Europe we are to look for the emanations of piety. France and Italy excelled particularly in the cultivation of learning. Robert, king of France, the

son and successor of Hugh Capet, who began to reign in 996, and died in 1031, distinguished himself as the friend of science. Even the ferocious Normans, whose wars and devastations were so terrible in Italy, France, and England, after they had established their respective governments, applied themselves to the cultivation of the human mind, and diffused some light among the people whom they had subdued. This was particularly the case with the southern parts of Italy, and with our own island. William the Conqueror, savage and imperious as he was, restored letters to England, which, amidst the Danish depredations, had been almost extinguished. And we shall see, at least, one learned foreigner at the head of the English Church, who, uniting piety to knowledge, was not unworthy of the Christian name. The learning itself, indeed, was not philosophical, but consisted chiefly of grammar, rhetoric, and logic. It was, however, connected with divinity: the Scriptures were held in high reputation: the hardy presumption of subtle theory, and the supercilious negligence concerning piety and public worship, which have marked the character of modern times, were then but little known among men. In such circumstances, to have learned to read, to have attended to the meaning of words, and to have employed the powers of the human mind, in any manner, on the sacred writings, were blessings to mankind. In Italy and France also there were some witnesses of divine truth, who opposed the abominations of the popedom.

The great scenes of political contention in this age, were, in the east, the Crusades; in the west, the disputes between the popes and the emperors. Civil, and even, what is called ecclesiastical, history, is full of these subjects.* To my

* The emperor of Germany, Henry III. surnamed the Black, hearing of the scandalous lives of the popes and the clergy, called the VIIIth General Council at Sutri, A. D. 1046; when the three pretenders to the popedom were deposed: Gregory VI. for Simony, Benedict IX. and Silvester III. for the same, and wicked lives in general. See Bower V.

* Mosheim, Cent. xi. 479.

province they bear scarcely any relation. The former were attended with dreadful evils, and much augmented with the influence of that pernicious superstition, which commutes for offences, and taught men to indulge themselves in the worst of vices, through the hope of finding their way to heaven by the merit of a Crusade. I shall, however, examine a little, hereafter, the grounds of the justice or injustice of these expeditions, because the character of some pious men of great eminence is connected with the question. The disputes between the popes and the emperors seem entirely barren of instructive incidents in religion. They confirm, nevertheless, the Christian in the belief of those scriptures which so accurately mark the character of Antichrist.* Gregory VII. commonly called Hildebrand, began the scheme, which fifty years after was completely accomplished, namely, of reserving the election of the popes from the emperors, and of fixing it entirely in the college of Cardinals, in which it still continues. The celibacy of the clergy,

Popery
traced, by
the council
of Placen-
tia,
A.D. 1095.

and the doctrine of transubstantiation, were established by the council of Placentia in 1095. Popery, in short, reigned triumphant, and no public profession of the Gospel, which professed independ-

ence of the Romish domination, could be endured in Europe. It will be proper to close this general view of the century with a circumstance or two concerning Africa. That once fruitful mother of the Churches, who gloried in her Cyprians and Augustines, had now only two bishops. The Saracens, masters of the country, persecuted the Christians there with great bitterness; yet so intemperate were the African Christians with the love of sin, that they quarrelled among themselves, and betrayed their bishop Cyprianus into the hands of the infidels, who much abused him. Gregory VII. wrote to the good bishop, to comfort him in his distresses. A friendly letter, abounding with truly Christian sentiments, even from so imperious and unchristian a character as Hildebrand's, might convey consolation to the mind of Cyprianus.† Piety united with distress

stands aloof from politics, and thankfully embraces truth as sent from her God, whatever be the instrument.

He, who seriously reflects in what glory the religion of Christ once shone in Asia and Africa; how dark, and idolatrous, and, at the same time, how insensible of their spiritual misery the inhabitants of those two quarters of the globe were, in this century, and continue even to the present times, will see with what reverential care the jewel of the Gospel should be cherished, while in our possession, lest we not only lose our own souls, but entail a curse on ages yet unborn.

CHAPTER II.

THE OPPOSITION MADE TO THE ERRORS OF POPERY.

In the year 1017, certain persons, real or supposed heretics, were discovered in France, who were said to hold, "that they did not believe—that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary;—that he died for the salvation of mankind;—that he was buried and rose again;—that baptism procured the remission of sins;—that the consecration by the priest constituted the Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ;—and that it was profitable to pray to the martyrs and confessors." Other practical matters of a detestable nature were ascribed to them. On their refusing to recant before a council held at Orleans, thirteen of them were burnt alive.* It is not easy to say what was the true character of these men. It is certain that they opposed the then reigning superstitions, and that they were willing to suffer for the doctrines which they espoused. The crimes alleged are so monstrous and incredible, as to render the charges adduced against their doctrines very suspicious. That they, however, were truly evangelical Christians, is what I dare not affirm.

Some time after there appeared, in Flanders, another sect, which was condemned in a synod held at Arras, in the

Heretics,
real, or
supposed,
in France,
A.D. 1017.

* See particularly 2 Thes. ii. 1 Tim. iv.

† Du Pin, 1st edit. Vol. IV. Cent. XI. p. 35.

* Du Pin, 1st Ed. Vol. IV. Cent. XI. p. 110.

Disciples
of Gundulphus
condemned,

A.D. 1025.

year 1025, by Gerard, bishop of Cambrai and Arras. They had come from Italy, being the disciples of Gundulphus, who taught there several supposed heretical doctrines. Gerard himself, in a letter

which he wrote on the subject, observes, that the disciples of Gundulphus travelled up and down to multiply converts, and that they had withdrawn many from the belief of the real presence in the Sacrament; that they owned themselves to be the scholars of Gundulphus, who had instructed them in the evangelical and apostolical doctrine. "This," said they, "is our doctrine, to renounce the world, to bridle the lusts of the flesh, to maintain ourselves by the labour of our own hands, to do violence to no man, to love the brethren. If this plan of righteousness be observed, there is no need of baptism; if it be neglected, baptism is of no avail." They particularly objected to the baptism of infants, because they were altogether incapable of understanding or confessing the truth. They denied the real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper: they rejected the consecration of Churches: they opposed various reigning superstitions, particularly the doctrine of purgatory and the practices connected with it. They likewise refused to worship the cross, or any images whatever. The bishop of Arras, having examined their supposed errors, and, in his own opinion, confuted them, drew up a confession of faith, contrary to those errors, which he required the heretics to sign. As they did not well understand the Latin tongue, he caused the confession to be explained to them in the vulgar tongue by an interpreter; then, according to this account, they approved and signed the instrument, and were dismissed in peace by the bishop.

It is very difficult to judge a cause by hearing only one side, and that side prejudiced to an extreme. If we are tempted to look on the doctrines of Gundulphus in a favourable light, whatever we may think of the characters of these his timorous disciples, from this short narrative of his enemies, how much more excellent might they appear, if we had his writings and sermons? As he did not deny the use of the Lord's supper, but only the doctrine of the real presence, it is probable that he held baptism also in a similar manner. If, however, he abso-

lutely rejected the baptism of infants, the people who call themselves Baptists at this day may seem with justice to claim Gundulphus as belonging to their sect. The nature of mankind, ever prone to run from one extreme to another, will easily account for this circumstance of the rejection of infant-baptism. The practice had long been sullied with superstitious fooleries: the transition to its total rejection was natural. Yet we shall afterward see reason to doubt, whether this people did deny the absolute unlawfulness of infant-baptism, when we come to consider the religious views of the Waldenses; for the probability is strong, that generally those called heretics in France, Flanders, and Italy, in these middle ages, were similar to each other in doctrines and customs. And certainly we see in them a noble testimony to the existence of evangelical truth, a body of men in Italy before the year 1026, in doctrine and practice directly opposite to the church of Rome, spreading purity of Christian worship through the world with all their might, and distinguishing themselves from the general mass of Christians in the West. I cannot believe that they held marriage as unlawful, though they were charged with this sentiment by their enemies: and notwithstanding some errors and blemishes, it is not to be doubted but that on the whole they were of the true Church of Christ. Faithfully to withstand idolatry and the reigning corruptions, required a light and strength far above nature, and I have only to regret, that, after a careful search, this is all the account I can find of them.

Not long after the supposed heretics of Orleans, arose the famous Berengarius of Tours, who wrote against the doctrine of the real presence. His writings called forth the most learned Romanists to defend the tenets of Paschasius Radbertus; and Berengarius was compelled to renounce, and to burn his writings. But he recanted again and again, and returned, says a contemporary popish author,* like the dog to his

They opposed the
Romanish
corruptions.

* Bertola, Presbyter of Constantia. See Bishop Newton's 3d vol. of the *Prophesies*, p. 164. I have examined Du Pin, Natalis Alexander, A. Butler, and Mosheim, on this subject; and find the whole mass of information so very uninteresting, though prolix beyond

vomit. Whether he died in the same sentiments, is strongly contested between the papists and the protestants. The former quote William of Malmsbury, who says, he did trembling. "This day," said he, "will my Lord Jesus Christ appear to me, either to glorify his mercy in my repentance, or, as I fear, to punish me for the mischief I have done by my example." The sentiment whether founded on fact or not, is strongly expressive of the genius of the then reigning religion, which excluded the spirit of adoption and filial confidence in God through Christ, and supported the spirit of bondage and anxiety. And the effect was, in this case, proportional to the cause. Men had lost the Christian article of justification through faith alone; and believing salvation to be suspended on the merit of human works, they found it impossible for Berengarius, even on the most sincere repentance for his supposed heresy, to countervail the mischiefs which he had done by misleading others. Whether then we suppose the confession of Berengarius to be a forgery, or a real fact, it was delivered in the spirit of those who weighed human merits and demerits in opposite scales, and found no other method of determining the question of a man's salvation or destruction, than that which should result from the comparison of his good actions with his crimes. How impossible is it by such a procedure to give solid peace of conscience to a sinner! Joy, love, and cheerful activity in the Christian life, can have no existence on such a plan; but such was the general spirit of the religion of the times we are reviewing. It is not easy to decide whether the papists or the protestants were in the right, in the determination of the question. In what sentiments did Berengarius die? The former have the advantage of positive testimony in their favour. The question is, however, perfectly immaterial. The doctrine of the real presence depends not on the character of Berengarius for its decision. I know no mark of his Christian piety; and his repeated dissimulations render him no honour to either party. It is, however, of some moment to observe, that he was the instrument of calling forth a degree of salutary opposi-

tion to the errors of the times. He called the Church of Rome a church of magicians, the council of vanity, and the seat of Satan. He corrupted, say some old historians, almost all the French, Italians, and English, with his depravities. The expressions are much too strong; but, no doubt, a salutary check was given to the growing superstitions: the opposition to the popedom, though it did not lay hold of the central truths of the Gospel, might yet pave the way for still more effective exertions; and served at least to inform mankind, that the court of Rome was not infallible.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN THIS CENTURY.

THE* work of Christian piety, which had been successfully carried on in Hungary, was now crowned with still greater prosperity. Stephen the king, who had been baptized by Adalbert bishop of Prague, and who began to reign in the year 997, showed himself a zealous patron of the Gospel.

Stephen
king of
Hungary
born,

A. D. 997.

Under his auspices, Astricus came into Hungary, opened a school, and educated ministers, while Boniface, one of his disciples, preached the word in Lower Hungary. The zeal of Stephen, indeed, was much stimulated by his pious queen, Gisla, daughter of the emperor Henry II. He often accompanied the preachers, and pathetically exhorted his subjects. He suppressed barbarous customs, and restrained blasphemy, theft, adultery and murder. His kindness to the poor, and, indeed his whole moral conduct, was admirable. His excellent code of laws are to this day the basis of the laws of Hungary. It is inscribed to his son Emeric, whom he exhorts to cultivate sincere humility, the true glory of a king. He forbids in it all impiety, the violation of the Sabbath, and irreverent behaviour in the house of God. This monarch defeated the prince of Transylvania, who had invaded his dominions, and took him prisoner; but restored him to liberty, on condition that he should allow the

measure, that the few sentences in the text seem to me all that is needful to be observed on the Berengarian controversy.

* Cent. Magd. Cent. 21.

Stephen was the first Christian monarch of Hungary. He died, A.D. 1038.

He laboured three years under a complication of diseases, and died in the year 1038.* He had lived to see all Hungary become externally Christian, though Christianity existed there, adulterated, or clouded at least by papal domination, and by the fashionable superstitions.

Gerard, a Venetian, had been much employed by king Stephen, as bishop of Choriad, a diocese of which two thirds of the inhabitants were idolaters. In less than a year, they, in general, had received the forms of Christianity from the pious labours of Gerard. The power of Stephen had seconded the views of the bishop; but the prospect changed on the king's decease. His nephew

Brief account of his successor, Peter.

and successor Peter, persecuted Gerard: he was, however, expelled by his subjects in 1042, and Abas, a nobleman, was made king of Hungary, who being slain after two years, Peter was recalled, but was once more banished. Andrew, the son of Ladislaus, the cousin of king Stephen, was appointed king, on the condition of restoring idolatry. Gerard and three other bishops endeavoured to divert him from the design. But they were assaulted on the road by duke Vathas, a zealous pagan. Andrew himself came up to the spot, and rescued one of the bishops: the other three, of whom Gerard was one, had fallen by the arm of the barbarian. It is probable, however, that Divine Providence permitted their atrocious villany for the good of the Church. The heart of Andrew was moved: he had seen of what idolatry was capable: he examined Christianity, received it, repressed idolatry, and reigned successfully. After the Hungarians had seen such a prince as Stephen, and had felt the good effects on society resulting from the establishment of Christianity, that they could still prefer idolatry is a deplorable proof of the native power of human depravity. What long-continued exertions are necessary to establish genuine goodness in a country!

* Alban Butler.

In* Denmark, Othingar, a bishop of that country, extended the pale of the Church by his labours; and Unwan, the bishop of Hainburg, under the patronage of the emperor Henry II. cut down the idolatrous groves, which the people of his diocese frequented, and erected churches in their stead.

Godeschalvus,† duke of the Vandals, revived among his subjects the regard for the Gospel, which they had once embraced, and which they had afterwards neglected. It is not easy to know precisely what were the limits of his dominions. But I find Lubeck, Mecklenburg, and Selavonia mentioned as belonging to, or as, at least, contiguous to his dukedom. Much has been said in praise of this prince, and of the success of his labours.‡ He is reported to have, in person, exhorted his people with much affection in the public assemblies; and John, a Scotchman, the bishop of Mecklenburg, baptized great numbers of the Selavonians. Yet this last people, together with the Obotriti, whose capital town was Mecklenburg, the Venedi, who dwelt on the banks of the Vistula, and the Prussians, continued pagans, in a great measure, throughout this century. Boleslaus, king of Poland, attempted to force these nations into a profession of Christianity; and some of his attendants used methods to evangelize them, which were better adapted to the nature of the Gospel. Boniface, in particular,§ and eighteen other persons, set out from Germany, to labour among the Prussians, and were massacred by that barbarous people. They seem to have been among the last of the European nations who submitted to the yoke of Christ. In the zealous attempts made for their conversion, though unsuccessful, we see abundant proofs, that the spirit of propagating the Gospel, which was the brightest gem of these dark ages, still existed.

Nor had the zeal of our own ancestors evaporated in this century.* In the year 1001, at the desire of Olaus II, king of Sweden, some English priests were sent over into the north by king Ethelred. Of these Sigefrid, archdeacon of York, was one. His labours were very successful, and he was

English missionary to Sweden, A.D. 1001.

* Cent. Magd. Cent. XI.

† Ibid.

‡ Crantzius in Vandalia.

§ Mosheim, Cent. XI. Chap. I.

appointed bishop of Wexia, in East-Gothland. Having established the churches there, he preached to the infidels in West-Gothland, leaving his nephews to govern his diocese while he was absent. But they were murdered by the pagan nobility of the country. A melancholy proof, how strong the spirit of idolatry still remained in these northern regions! The same kind of family pride, which, at this day, preserves the remnants of popery in protestant countries, preserved the existence of paganism in Sweden. Sigefrid, however, returned into his diocese, died there a natural death, and was buried at Wexia.

This man is said to have finished his course about the year 1002; an account inconsistent, as to the order of time, with that which has been already given. But not to trouble the reader with such niceties of chronology, as at this distance of time are impossible to be adjusted, it is more material to observe that he appears to have been an apostolic person; that on his first arrival in Sweden, he was obliged, chiefly, to preach by interpreters; that he prevailed on the king to spare the murderers of his nephews: and, that though he was very poor, he refused to touch the fine which had been exacted on those murderers, and which had been offered to him as a present by the Swedish monarch.*

Also to preach by interpreters, was appointed bishop in Norway, and preached in Schonen.

Ulfrid, a learned and virtuous Englishman, preached the faith, first in Germany, afterward in Sweden under the patronage of king Olaus; where he was an instrument of converting many, till, in the year 1028, preaching against the idol Thor, and hewing it down with a hatchet, he was slain by the pagans. See Adam of Bremen, who wrote his History of the Church in 1080.

Canute, king of Denmark, natural son of Swain II. whose great uncle Canute had reigned in England, was carefully educated by his father, who had no legitimate issue. He became king of Denmark by election, warred against the turbulent barbarians his neighbours, and planted the profession of Christianity in

Courland, Samogitia, and Livonia. His zeal for the maintenance of the clergy having disgusted his subjects, he was deserted and murdered. His brother Olaus succeeded, whose successor Eric III. restored the authority of the clergy. The life of Canute was written by Ælnoth, a monk of Canterbury, who lived twenty-four years in Denmark, and who wrote in 1105. He tells us, that the first preachers of the faith in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, were English priests; that the Danes embraced the Gospel with zeal, but that the Swedes, obstinate in their idolatry, murdered an Englishman, named Eschil, while he was preaching Christ to some savage tribes. That Sweden, however, was chiefly evangelized by Anglo-Saxon missionaries, is the remark of Stiernman, in his treatise on the state of learning among the ancient Swedes.*

Olaus, king of Norway, assisted the Danes against Ethelred of England, and, in his return from England, carried over several priests; one of whom, named Grimkele, was appointed bishop of Drontheim, the capital of king Olaus. This prince abolished idolatrous customs in Norway, Orkney, and Iceland. He used to travel with zealous preachers, exhorting his subjects, and destroying temples. The pagans, at length, aided by Canute of England, defeated and slew him in the year 1030. His son Magnus was called home from Russia, and became king of Norway in 1039.†

The triumphs of the Gospel in Denmark were, upon the whole, very conspicuous in this century. Hear the account of Adam of Bremen, who wrote concerning the situation of this country in the year 1080. "Look," says he, "at that very ferocious nation of the Danes—For a long time they have been accustomed, in the praises of God, to resound Alleluia. Look at that piratical people. They are now content with the fruits of their own country. Look at that horrid region, formerly altogether inaccessible on account of idolatry; they now eagerly admit the preachers of the word."‡

Canute IV. surnamed the Saint, murdered about 1086.

Ælnoth, a monk of Canterbury, wrote his life.

Olaus II. king of Norway, slain by Canute of England, A.D. 1030.

* Olaus Magn. B. 17. C. 20. Collier's Eccl. Hist. Alban Butler, Col. II.

* Rud. Vol. II.

† Ibid. VII.

‡ Gibbon, Vol. V. C. 55.

From this very imperfect account, for which I am obliged to Gibbon, and which he candidly admits to be true, we may collect, what a blessed work it is to propagate the Gospel of Christ; that no men deserve better of mankind than faithful missionaries; and, that the allegorical descriptions of the effects of real Christianity, which we meet with in the prophets, have a deep and solid meaning.* To see Danes and Englishmen enjoying together, in mutual confidence and charity, the blessings of true religion, must have been surprising to those, who had known with what savage barbarity the former had desolated the habitations of the latter. In truth, that religion which could molify, transform, and rectify the heart of an ancient Dane, must indeed be divine. These are the triumphs of the Gospel. It was the preaching of the Cross, attended with the energy of the Holy Spirit, which effected this salutary change of manners in the north of Europe. Denmark had inflicted much evil on her southern neighbours, and they requited her with spiritual blessings. It is remarkable, that, to this day, no nation has exceeded the Danes in labours for the propagation of the Gospel, in proportion to their abilities and opportunities. And it must be confessed, that they owe much to mankind on the score of gratitude, for the favours of the same kind which their ancestors received.

For want of materials, I cannot dwell on the particulars of the conversion of this people.† But the durable change of their manners intimates, that their country must have been blessed with one of those gracious effusions of the Holy Spirit.

* Isaiah xi. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid.

† One instance, however, is recorded, that deserves to be mentioned. William, an English priest, attended Canute the Great, in one of his voyages from England to Denmark. Moved with pity on account of the idolatry of the Danes, he desired to be left as a missionary. His labours were successful, and he was appointed bishop of Roschild in Zealand. King Swein having put to death some persons without a legal trial, William forbade his entrance into the church. Several courtiers drawing their swords, the bishop offered them his neck. Swein submitted, conformed to the rules of penance imposed by William, and ever after concurred with his views. The bishop of Roschild died in the year 1067. Alban Butler.

the consequences of which are commonly felt for ages after. Toward the close of this century, the northern nations ceased to invade the southern entirely. The last attempt was made by Magnus, king of Norway, on the isle of Anglesea; but he was repulsed by Hugh earl of Shrewsbury,* in the eleventh year of William Rufus. "That restless people seem about this time to have learned the use of tillage, which thenceforth kept them at home, and freed the other nations of Europe from the devastations spread over them by those piratical invaders. This proved one great cause of the subsequent settlement and improvement of the southern nations."

I quote the words of Hume, which represent in a very perspicuous manner the advantages resulting from the civilization of the north, not only to the Danes, Norwegians, and Swedes, but also to the south of Europe. It is in assigning the cause of this happy change, that I am obliged to dissent from that elegant historian. He thinks that the effect is sufficiently accounted for by these northern people having learned the use of tillage. But, besides that he has no historical evidence of this fact, and supports it by mere conjecture, it is fair to ask, How came they to be so docile and tractable, as to submit to the arts of agriculture? Does a nation, habituated to arms and to idleness, easily give itself up to industry, and the arts of peace? If we can answer this question aright, we shall know to what is to be ascribed the happy transformation of the north. Scanty as my materials have been, I have yet shown, that the Gospel had now been for three centuries preached in Scandinavia. To this, doubtless as the principal cause, we must attribute the happy alteration of manners in those barbarous regions. Christian godliness has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. While it conducts enslaved souls into liberty, and, turning them from the power of Satan to God, invests them with the garments of salvation, it also meliorates their condition in this life, and diffuses through the world the most salutary precepts of peace, order, and tranquillity. Let not men expect the general civilization of the globe by any other methods. When the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, then

* Hume, vol. i. c. v.

will the nations learn war no more. We enjoy at this day, the advantages of society derived to Europe, from the propagation of the Gospel, while we ungratefully depreciate the labours of those Christian Missionaries, through which, under God, those advantages were conveyed to us. Our Saviour has directed us to pray to the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth labourers into his harvest: and every one, who breathes the genuine spirit of the Gospel, will devoutly obey the precept.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN ENGLAND.

As the importance of our own country began to be displayed in this century, it will be proper to take some notice of the appearance of religion in an island, which, we have seen, had so distinguished a share in diffusing divine truth through the northern parts of Europe. Even the very little of evangelical religion which we may discover, here, deserve our attention.

In the reign of Ethelred, a very cruel massacre of the Danes was, by royal order, made throughout his dominions. The rage of the populace, excited by so many injuries, was extreme, and made no distinction between the innocent and the guilty. Swein, king of Denmark, amply revenged these cruelties, by repeated devastations: and the unwarlike Ethelred fled into Normandy to save his life, while his subjects felt all the miseries which might be expected from increased and victorious barbarians. Among other instances of their hostilities, they levied a contribution on the county of Kent, and murdered the archbishop of Canterbury, who had refused to contribute to the exaction.*

The author, whose short account I have followed, does not deign to give us the name of this archbishop, nor to relate a single circumstance of his murder. I cannot but think, however, that he would have enlarged on the subject if it would have gratified his dislike of religion. But thus a conduct, at once the most ingratitudinous and patriotic, is buried in obscurity, because the hero was an ecclesiastic. Let it, however, reserve the pasture which is due to it from those animosities.

The Danes were besieging Canterbury, when Alphege, the archbishop, was

entreated by his friends to save his own life. "God forbid," said Alphege, "that I should tarnish my character by so inglorious a conduct; and should be afraid of going to heaven, because a violent death lies across the passage. I have been the instrument of drawing over several considerable persons among these Danes to the Gospel: if this be a fault, I shall be happy in suffering for it. I have ransomed some of my countrymen, and supported others when in captivity. If Danes be angry, because I have reformed their sins, it behoves me to remember him who hath said, 'if thou give not the wicked warning, his blood will I require at thine hand.' It is the character of a hireling to leave the sheep when he seeth the wolf coming. I mean, therefore, to stand the shock, and submit to the order of Divine Providence."†

The archbishop, influenced by these motives, remained in Canterbury, and exhorted the people, as a Christian pastor: but the Danes entered the city by violence, and exercised the most horrid barbarities, particularly on ladies of quality, whom they dragged to the stake and burnt to death, nor did they spare even infants. Alphege, moved at these hideous scenes, had the boldness to expostulate with them. "The cradle," says he, "can afford no triumphs for soldiers. It would be better for you to exercise your vengeance on me, whose death may give some celebrity to your names. Remember some of your troops have, through my means, been brought over to the faith of Christ, and I have frequently rebuked you for your acts of apostasy." The Danes, transported at his words, seized, and bound the archbishop, and kept him prisoner for seven months. His liberty, however, was offered to him on condition of immense payments to be made by himself, and by Ethelred the king. He told them that the sums were too large to be raised by any exaction, and he firmly refused to drain the treasures of the Church for the sake of saving his life; accounting it wrong to give to Pagans those sums which had been devoted to the honour of religion, and to the relief of the poor. The merciless Danes enraged beyond measure, threw him down and stoned him, while he prayed for his enemies and for the Church; and, at length, a certain Dane, lately become a Christian, dis-

* Hume, v. l. p. 168. † Collier's Eccl. Hist. Vol. I. 3 F

† Osborn de Vit. Alphegi. Havodien's Ann.

patched him, in order to free him from his pain.—One of his successors, the famous Lanfranc, doubted whether Alphege ought to be looked on as a martyr, because he had not died explicitly for the Christian faith. But Anselm, a still more famous personage, told Lanfranc, that Alphege was a real martyr, who died rather than commit an unjust thing. Nor

Alphege,
archbishop of
Canterbury,
murdered,
A.D. 1013.

is it easy to conceive that any spirit, less than that of a Christian, could have conducted him through such a scene, and supported him with so much fortitude and charity.—Alphege was murdered in the year 1013.

A preceding archbishop, probably his immediate predecessor, Elfric, in the year 1006, had directed in one of the canons published at a council,* in which he presided, that every parish-priest should be obliged, on Sundays and on other holidays, to explain the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Gospel for the day, before the people, in the English tongue. While historians enlarge on the quarrels between the papacy and the civil power, and descant, with tedious prolixity, on the superstitions, which were in vogue during the dark ages, they are too apt to pass over in a slight and cursory manner such facts as these, which appear too important to be overlooked. Let the reader who has seriously considered the importance and excellency of evangelical truth, reflect on the preciousness of the doctrines, which the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and some of the plainest and most practical passages of the New Testament do either exhibit or imply; and he will be convinced, that if the canon of Elfric had been obeyed with any tolerable degree of spirit and exactness in a number of parishes in England, the ignorance and darkness could not have been so complete nor so universal, as we are generally taught to believe it was. Such bishops as Elfric and Alphege must have been useful lights in those times. The Gospels read in the Churches, I suppose, were either the same as, or similar to, those which are read at this day; nor is it to be imagined, that a familiar exposition of them, in conjunction with the Creed and Lord's Prayer would be in vain; because, in every age, the preaching of Christian fundamentals is accompanied with a divine energy, and the word returns not

void to its Divine Author, but prospers in the thing whereto he sends it.* The mixture of superstitious inventions might adulterate, but could not altogether destroy, the efficacy of the word of God. Nor can I doubt but many at this day, who boast of their exemptions from papal ignorance, and who call themselves enlightened, because they have been refined by philosophical and political knowledge, are themselves much inferior, in Christian light and spirit, to many who lived in the dark times of the eleventh century, under the benefit of such advantages of instruction as the canon before us afforded. For that elementary knowledge, which is the object of the canon, is ever more salutary in its influence, than the most ingenious subtilties of literary refinement in religion. These, like the spider's web, are intricate, and are often found to be flimsy and void of any substantial advantage to mankind. Armed with catechetical knowledge, I conceive that serious minds would in that age find rest and food to their souls; and the love of God being, by this means, shed abroad in the heart, would constrain the missionaries of that period to diffuse the Gospel in the northern regions with ability and success.

The facts, on which these reflections are founded, may show us, that God had not forsaken this island during the disastrous reign of Ethelred, though the political hemisphere was gloomy beyond expression. Ethelred himself, had returned into his kingdom, yet was he never able to make head against the Danes, who at length, in the year 1017, brought the English into total subjection. Their king Canute, and his two sons in succession, governed England, which, however, recovered itself from the Danish yoke, and received Edward the Confessor, the son of Ethelred, as its monarch, in the year 1041. But the Saxon line, though restored, was unable to maintain itself on the throne, and soon sunk under the power of William the Norman, who in 1066, beheld himself sovereign of England, which continues under the government of his posterity to this day.

Conquest
of England
by Wil-
liam, duke
of Nor-
mandy,
A.D. 1066.

Under William,† named the Conqueror,

* Isaiah lv.

† Osmond, a Norman, privy counsellor to William the Conqueror, afterwards bishop of Salisbury, corrected the Liturgy used in his

* Collier.

the papal power, which hitherto had by no means been so absolute in England as in the southern countries, began to be felt more strongly, and soon reached the same height which it had obtained in France and Italy. The tyrant found it a convenient engine for the support of his own despotic authority: and while he took care that every one of his subjects should, in ecclesiastical matters, bow under the yoke of the bishop of Rome, he reserved to himself the supreme dominion in civil affairs, and exercised it with the most unqualified rigour. Lanfranc, whom he appointed archbishop of Canterbury, zealously supported the power of Rome, and confirmed the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation by his influence and authority. His successor, Anselm, was no less devoted to the pope, and maintained several famous contests with his sovereign William Rufus, the son and successor of the Conqueror. This archbishop contributed much, by his influence, to settle the celibacy of the clergy in England; and it must be confessed, that even the virtues of this great man, through the peculiar infelicity of the times, were attended with great disadvantages to the state of society. For it ought to be observed, that if we except his attachment to the authority of the pope, and his passion for the fashionable superstitions, his conduct was pious and exemplary; his zeal against the luxury, simony, and vices of the great, was laudable; and, above all, his defence of evangelical truth, adorned by an upright course of life and conversation, preserved under God some genuine remains of godliness in the nation. Nor ought we to follow implicitly the ideas of our protestant historians, who, in every debate between the king and the Church, are sure to decide against the latter. What could be more arbitrary, for instance, than the demand of a thousand pounds which William Rufus made upon Anselm? And what more warrantable than the conduct of the latter? He offered the king five hundred pounds, which were refused in disgust. Anselm gave the sum to the poor, rather than rack his tenants to

double it, and said to the tyrant,—“If I am used according to my station, all I have is at your service; if I am treated as a slave, I shall keep my property to myself.”

And undoubtedly the rapacity and profaneness of the Norman princes, particularly of William Rufus, in the seizure and alienation of ecclesiastical benefices, were justly opposed by the bishops of those times. It is only to be wished, that they had conducted their opposition on the grounds of Scripture, and the precedents of the primitive Church, not on the authority of the court of Rome.

Nothing else worthy of a place in these memoirs seems to have occurred, in the general history of our island, during the course of this century, except what relates to the personal character of Margaret queen of Scotland: a woman of the rarest piety, and of a character fitted to throw a lustre on the purest ages. She was sister to Edgar Atheling, the grandson of Edmund Ironside, who was the son and successor of Ethelred. Edgar was a peculiar favourite of the English, because he was the last of the Saxon line of princes. In the reign of William the Norman, he and his sister found a safe retreat in Scotland, under the protection of Malcolm, who by the assistance of Edward the Confessor, had recovered the throne of Scotland from the usurper Macbeth. Malcolm married the English princess. Wonderful things are related of her piety, liberality, and humility. Through her influence, the ferocious spirit of her husband received a happy tincture of humanity. She was enabled to reform the kingdom of Scotland in a great degree, and to introduce a more serious regard to the duties of the Lord's day, than had been known in that country. She had by Malcolm six sons and two daughters. Three of her sons reigned successively, and were esteemed excellent monarchs. Her daughter Matilda was wife to Henry I. of England, and was looked on as a pious Christian. Margaret had taken uncommon care of her children's education, and the fruits of her labours appeared in their lives. Theodorick, her confessor, observes that she was remarkably attentive in public prayer. “And,” says he, “she would discourse with me concerning the sweetness of everlasting life, in such a manner as to draw tears from my eyes.” This same Theodorick, a monk of Durham,

diocesan. And he was thought to have done the work so judiciously, that the service “*In Usam Sacrum*,” was received in other dioceses, and became common throughout England. For, before this time, every diocese had its appropriate liturgy. Collier's Eccles. History.

* Collier.

* Alban Butler, Vol. V.

wrote her Life. She was afflicted with sickness at the very time in which her husband Malcolm was slain at Alnwick in Northumberland, in the time of William Rufus, in 1093. The bitter news was brought to her ears: her reflection upon it was truly Christian: "I thank thee, O Lord, that this great affliction is evidently sent to purify me from my sins. O Lord Jesus Christ, who by thy death hast given life to the world, deliver me from evil." She survived this event only a few days. A princess of such accomplishments could not have shone in vain in Scotland; but, most probably, must have led many, in a rude and ignorant age, to think that there was something real in godliness.

CHAPTER V.

ANSELM.

THAT good men frequently appear to more advantage in private life than in public, is a remark which was perhaps never better exemplified than in this prelate, of whom all that is known by the generality of readers is, that he was a strenuous supporter of the papal dominion in England. I can easily conceive that he might be influenced by the purest motives in this part of his conduct, when I reflect on the shameless and profane manners of the Norman princes. But his private life was purely his own, originating more directly from the honest and good heart, with which, through grace, he was eminently endowed. As a divine and a Christian, he was the first of characters in this century, and is, therefore, deserving of some attention.

He was born at Aoust in Piedmont.* From early life his religious cast of mind was so prevalent that, at the age of fifteen, he offered himself to a monastery, but was refused, lest his father should have been displeased. He afterwards became entangled in the vanities of the world; and, to his death, he bewailed the sins of his youth. Becoming a scholar of Lanfranc, his predecessor in the See of Canterbury, at that time a monk at Bec, in Normandy, he commenced monk in the year 1060, at the age of twenty-seven. He afterwards became

Anselm becomes a monk,

the prior of the monastery. His progress in religious knowledge was great: but mildness and charity seem to have predominated in all his views of piety. The book, commonly called Augustine's Meditations, was chiefly abstracted from the writings of Anselm. At the age of forty-five he became abbot of Bec. Lanfranc dying in 1089, William Rufus usurped the revenues of the See of Canterbury, and treated the monks of the place in a barbarous manner. For several years this profane tyrant declared, that none should have the See while he lived; but a fit of sickness overawed his spirit; and conscience, the voice of God, which often speaks even in the proudest and the most insensible, severely reprov'd his wickedness; insomuch that he nominated Anselm to be the successor of Lanfranc. That Anselm should have accepted the office with much reluctance, under such a prince, is by no means to be wondered at: and, the more upright and conscientious men are, the more wary and reluctant will they always be found in accepting offices of so sacred a nature; though it is natural for men of a secular spirit to judge of others by themselves, and to suppose the "nolo episcopari," to be, without any exceptions, the language of hypocrisy.

A.D. 1060.

Lanfranc Archbishop of Canterbury dies,

A.D. 1089.

William Rufus appoints Anselm his successor.

Anselm pressed the king to allow the calling of councils, in order to institute an inquiry into crimes and abuses; and also to fill the vacant abbey, the revenues of which William had reserved to himself with sacrilegious avarice. Nothing but the conviction of conscience, and the ascendancy which real uprightness maintains over wickedness and profligacy, could have induced such a person as William Rufus to promote Anselm to the See, though he must have foreseen how improbable it was, that the abbot would ever become the tame instrument of his tyranny and oppression. In fact, Anselm, finding the Church overborne by the iniquities of the tyrant, retired to the continent with two monks, one of whom, named Eadmer, wrote his Life.

Living a retired life in Calabria, he gave employment to his active mind in writing a treatise on the reasons why God should become man, and on the doctrine of the Trinity retired

* Butler, Vol. IV.

into Calabria. and the Incarnation: a work at that time useful to the

Church of Christ, as he refuted the sentiments of Roscelin, who had published erroneous views concerning the Trinity. For, after a sleep of many ages, the genius of Arianism or Socinianism, or both, had awakened, and taken advantage of the general ignorance, to corrupt the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. Anselm knew how to reason closely and systematically, after the manner of the famous Peter Lombard, master of the sentences, and bishop of Paris; and he was properly the first of the scholastic divines. The method of ratiocination then used, was, no doubt, tedious, verbose, and subtle, and, in process of time, grew more and more perplexed. It was, however, preferable to the dissipation and inanity, which, in many publications of our times, pretend to the honour of good sense and sound wisdom, though devoid of learning and industry. Moreover, the furniture of the schools, in the hands of a fine genius like Anselm, adorned with solid piety, and under the control of a good understanding, stemmed the torrent of profane infidelity, and ably supported the cause of godliness in the world. Roscelin was confuted, and the common orthodox doctrine of the Trinity upheld itself in the Church. What were the precise views of Roscelin will be better understood, when we come to introduce one of his scholars, the famous Peter Abelard, to the reader's notice.

Anselm, weary of an empty title of dignity, and seeing no probability of being able to serve the Church in the archbishopric, entreated the pope to give him leave to resign it, but in vain. Nor does he seem to have been justly chargeable with the display of an "ostentatious humility," when he had first refused the promotion.* The integrity with which he had acted, ever since that promotion had taken place, ought to have rescued him from the illiberal censure. "Rufus had detained in prison several persons, whom he had ordered to be freed during the time of his penitence; he still preyed upon the ecclesiastical benefices; the sale of spiritual dignities continued as open as ever; and he kept possession of a considerable part of the revenues belonging to the See of Canterbury." Was it a crime, or was it an instance of laudable

integrity in Anselm, to remonstrate against such proceedings? I suppose the candour and good sense of the author, to whom I allude, would have inclined him to praise that upright conduct for which Anselm was obliged to retire to the continent, had not this same Anselm been a priest, and a priest too of sincere zeal and fervour. In justice to Anselm, it should, moreover, be observed, that one reason why he wished to resign his archbishopric was, that he believed he might be of more service to the souls of men in a merely clerical character, which was more obscure. And he was naturally led to assign this reason to the pope, from the observation which he made of the effect of his preaching on audiences in Italy.

Men of superior talents, however, are frequently born to drudge in business or in arts, whether they be in prosperous or in adverse circumstances. For mankind feel the need of such men; and they themselves are not apt to bury their powers in indolence. A council was called at Bari by pope Urban, to settle with the Greeks the dispute which had long separated the Eastern and Western Churches, concerning the procession of the Holy Ghost. For the Greek Church, it should seem, without any spiritual reason, had denied the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son; and had, therefore, thrust the words *and the son*^o out of the Nicene Creed. While the disputants were engaged, the pope called on Anselm, as his father and master, for his reply. The archbishop arose, and by his powers of argumentation silenced the Greeks.

At Lyons, he wrote on the conception of the Virgin, and on original sin; and thus he employed himself in religious, not in secular cares, during the whole of his exile. A strong proof of his exemption from that domineering ambition, of which he has been accused. In the year 1100 he heard of the death of his royal persecutor, which he is said to have ardently lamented, and returned into England by the invitation of Henry I. To finish, at once, the account of his unpleasant contests with the Norman princes, he, at length, was enabled to compromise them. The great object of controversy was the same in England as in the other countries of Europe, namely, "Whether the investiture of bishops

Rufus dies,

A.D. 1100.

Anselm returns to England.

* See Hume, Vol. I. p. 302.

o "Proceeding from the Father and the Son."

should be received from the king or from the pope." Anselm, moved undoubtedly by a conscientious zeal, because all the world bore witness to his integrity, was decisive for the latter; and the egregious iniquities, and shameless violations of all justice and decorum, practised by princes in that age, would naturally strengthen the prejudices of Anselm's education. To receive investiture from the pope for the spiritual jurisdiction, and, at the same time, to do homage to the king for the temporalities, was the only medium, which in those times could be found, between the pretensions of the civil and ecclesiastical dominion; and matters were settled, on this plan, both in England and in Germany.

If Anselm then contributed to the depression of the civil power, and the confirmation of the papal, he was unhappily carried away by a popular torrent, which few minds had power to resist. It seems certain, however, that ambition formed no part of this man's character. "While I am with you," he would often say to his friends, "I am like a bird in her nest amidst her young, and enjoy the sweets of retirement and social affections. But when I am thrown into the world, I am like the same bird hunted and harassed by ravens or other fowls of prey: the incursions of various cares distract me; and secular employments, which I love not, vex my soul." He, who spent a great part of his life in retirement, who thought, spake, and wrote so much of vital godliness; and whose moral character was allowed, even by his enemies, to have ever been without a blot, deserves to be believed in these declarations.*

Let us then attend to those traits of character, which were more personal, and in which the heart of the man more plainly appears. He practised that, which all godly persons have ever found salutary, and even necessary, namely, retired and devotional meditation, and even watched long in the night for the same purpose. One day, a hare, pursued by the hounds, ran under his horse for refuge as he was riding. The object bringing at once to his recollection a most awful scene, he stopped, and said weeping, "This hare reminds me of a sinner just dying, surrounded with devils, waiting for their prey." It was in this manner that he used to spiritualize every object, a practice ever derided by profane minds, who

ther performed injudiciously or not; but to which, in some degree, every devout and pious spirit on earth has been addicted.

In a national synod, held at St. Peter's, Westminster, he forbade men to be sold as cattle, which had till then been practised. For the true reliefs and mitigations of human misery lay entirely, at that time, in the influence of Christianity; and small as that influence then was, the ferocity of the age was tempered by it; and human life was thence prevented from being entirely degraded to a level with that of the beasts which perish.

Anselm died in the sixteenth year of his archbishopric, and in the seventy-sixth year of his age. Toward the end of his life, he wrote on the Will, Predestination, and Grace, much in Augustine's manner. In prayers, meditations, and hymns, he seems to have had a peculiar delight. Eadmer says, that he used to say, "If he saw hell open, and sin before him, he would leap into the former, to avoid the latter." I am sorry to see this sentiment, which, stripped of figure, means no more than what all good men allow, that he feared sin more than punishment, aspersed by so good a divine as Fox the martyrologist.* But Anselm was a papist, and the best protestants have not been without their prejudices.

Anselm
dies, aged
76.

But it is time to let Anselm speak for himself. We shall hear from him something by no means unworthy the attention of the most intelligent Christians. A direction for the visitation of the sick was composed by Anselm;† the substance of which is as follows. Two previous questions were to be asked by the minister: the first was, Dost thou believe that thou deservest damnation? The second was, Dost thou intend to lead a new life? When the sick man had returned an answer in the affirmative to these questions, he was further asked, Dost thou believe, that thou canst not be saved but by the death of Christ?—The sick man answered, I do so believe. Then the minister says to him, See then, while life remains in thee, that thou repose thy confidence only in the death of Christ; trust in nothing else; commit thyself wholly to this death; cover thyself wholly with this alone; mix thyself wholly with this death; involve thyself wholly in this death. And, if the Lord will judge thee, say, Lord, I cast the death of our Lord

* See his Life, written by Eadmer.

* Acts and Monuments, v. I. † Ans. Op.

Jesus Christ between myself and thy judgment; otherwise I will not engage in judgment with thee. And if he shall say to thee, that thou art a sinner, say, I place the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my sins. If he shall say to thee, that thou hast deserved damnation, say, Lord, I cast the death of our Lord Jesus Christ between me and my evil deserts, and I offer his merits for that merit which I ought to have had, and have not. If he shall say that he is angry with thee, say, Lord, I cast the death of the Lord Jesus Christ between me and thy displeasure."

It cannot be doubted, but all this process would be mere formality in the hands of many persons, both pastors and people. But so, even at this day, are needed the most spiritual catechisms, and the most evangelical exhortations. While the world is, as it is, depraved and sensual, the very best means of grace will be lost on many. But it is not easy to conceive, that he who composed these directions could himself have been a mere formalist. They breathe the spirit of one who seems to have felt what it is to appear before the Majesty of God; and also how unclean and defiled with sin both his nature and practice had been; and how unsafe it is to rest on any thing but Christ crucified. The jewel of the Gospel, peace by the blood of Christ alone, which is the doctrine that gives law and being, order and efficacy, to all the other doctrines of Christianity, is contained in this plain catechism; and the variety and repetition, which the author indulges, offensive as they are in the light of criticism, demonstrate the author's sincerity and zeal, and are the natural effect of the impression which had been felt in his own conscience. For those alone whose hearts have been ploughed deep; who have been truly serious for eternity; have been well practised in self-examination; and are become well acquainted with their own desolations, are disposed to relish the peculiarities and the essentials of the Gospel. Let a man once know himself a sinner deserving destruction, and be truly desirous to become a new creature, and he will find that the Gospel of Christ is the only cordial that can console him. This cordial is here administered: and as it belongs to true penitents only, to the humble and the contrite, so is it administered by the skilful divine before us: or,

in other words, that doctrine, which is "most wholesome and very full of comfort," namely, the doctrine of justification "before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings,"* is preached by a bishop of the eleventh century. So strong was the provision made by the God of all grace for the preservation of evangelical truth in the darkest times. With happy inconsistency, Anselm, in seeking peace to his conscience, and in preaching peace to others, sees none of the manifold superstitious methods with which the papacy abounded, and which he himself professed. I suppose he would give some lower meaning to the doctrine of the merits of Saints and the efficacy of pilgrimages; some meaning, which should not interfere with a simple application to Jesus Christ. And this was the method of many other pious spirits in those ages. The reader is desired to observe, however, that we have found the essential and leading doctrine of real Christianity in the possession of Anselm: and hence we are at no loss to account for the superior piety and virtue which rendered him the ornament of the times in which he lived, though they exempted him not from the common frailty of being seduced by the prejudices of education. The inestimable benefit of reading, and meditating on the divine word with prayer, may, from this example, be inferred. Such reading and meditation were the delight and employment of Anselm through life; and he found the word of God a light to his feet, and a lantern to his paths.

Hence also it is not to be wondered at that he should so seriously oppose the anti-trinitarian refinements of Roscelin. He, who finds relief to his own mind in the death of Christ, can never behold with indifference the attacks made on the dignity of Christ's person. And though, in that rude age, men had not, so commonly as in our times, learned to express a contempt for the Scriptures, yet there were those who ridiculed and pretended to argue against their divine inspiration. The zeal of Anselm, who lived for eternity, by faith in Christ, was induced to oppose these attempts, in a work entitled "The Fool refuted."† The ingenuity

* See 11th Article of Religion.

† *Other addresses iniquitatem.* — See Mac's transl. of Mosheim, Vol. I. Cent. XI. p. 530. Quarto edition.

and acuteness of the archbishop were displayed with good effect in this treatise. It is proper to observe, also, that this great man was the real inventor of the argument, erroneously attributed to Descartes, which undertakes to prove the existence of God from the idea of infinite perfection, which is to be found, without exception, in every man's mind.*

Thus did Anselm employ himself in the defence of divine truth and serious religion. His knowledge of the Scriptures was, I am persuaded, so sound, and his love of them so sincere, that if he had met with direct opposition, on these infinitely momentous subjects, from the court of Rome, he would have sooner pronounced the pope to be Antichrist, than have parted with his evangelical sentiments and profession. But the course of events threw him into such circumstances, that it became the temporal interest of the court of Rome to cherish and honour the archbishop.

Hear with what seriousness he expresses his views concerning his own justification before God. "I am conscious that I deserve damnation, and my repentance suffices not for satisfaction; but certain it is that thy mercy abounds above all offences."†

The works of this great prelate are partly scholastical, partly devotional. Taken together, they demonstrate him to have been eminently endowed with genius and piety. Like Augustine, whom he seems to have followed as his model, he abounds both in profound argumentation on the most abstruse and difficult subjects, and in devout and fervent meditations on practical godliness. But it will not be so much adapted to the purpose of this history to analyze his tracts, as to give some detached passages on matters of real Christian importance.

In his treatise on the reason why God became man,‡ he says, "I see that the man whom we seek as qualified to be our Mediator must be of this description; he must not die of necessity, because he must be omnipotent; nor of debt, because he must not be a sinner; and yet he must die voluntarily, because it was necessary that he should do so, as Mediator."—"As it is necessary that man should satisfy for the sin of man, therefore none could make satisfaction, but he who was properly man, Adam, himself, or one of

his race. That Adam himself could satisfy was impossible."§

He thus expresses his admiration, while he meditates on the power of the cross.† "O hidden fortitude! that a man hanging on the cross should suspend eternal death, which oppressed mankind! That a man, nailed to the cross, should overcome the world, and punish its wicked powers with everlasting destruction. O secret powers! that a man, condemned with robbers, should save men condemned with devils; that a man extended on a cross should draw all things to himself! O secret virtue! that one, expiring in agony, should draw innumerable souls from hell; that man should undertake the death of the body, and destroy the death of souls!"

Speaking of the humiliation of Christ,‡ he observes, "He assumed poverty, yet lost not his riches; rich within, poor without. God was latent in riches; man was apparent in poverty.—By that blood we have lost the rags of iniquity, that we might be clothed with the garment of immortality. Lest we should not dare with our poverty to approach him, who has all riches in his hand, he exhibited himself poor; that is, God condescended to take upon him our nature. That man might return to internal, spiritual riches, God condescended to appear outwardly poor. We should have wanted at least one proof of his tender love to us, unless he had taken upon him our poverty, and he himself had sustained, for a time, that indigence, from which he delivers us."

The reader, from these specimens, may form some idea of the felicity of thought, which enabled this prelate to unite practical devotion with scholastic theology, and to educe the most cogent motives to gratitude and pious affections from those mysterious doctrines, which have ever been esteemed, by wise and holy men, the special glory of Christianity.

The following thought seems to throw no small light on some of the most sublime ideas of Scripture: He has his eye on the first chapter to the Ephesians. "In the revelation of the mystery of our Lord's incarnation, the angels themselves received an advancement of dignity. Even their joy was increased, when they began to receive men into their fellowship. Christ indeed died not for angels; nevertheless, the fruits of his redemption

* See *Id.* p. 483. † *Anselm's Meditations.*

‡ *Cur Deus homo*, *Lit.* 2. c. 11.

• *Idem.* c. 8. † *De Medit. red. hum.* c. 1.

‡ *On 2 Cor.* viii.

tend to their benefit. The enmity which sin had caused between the angelic and human nature, is done away; and even from the redemption of men the loss of the ancient angelic ruin is repaired. Thus heavenly and earthly things are renewed; those, however, only, who were in Christ elected and predestinated before the foundation of the world, obtain this benefit. For in him they always were and are, whom God hath chosen from eternity."

His views of the virtue and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ he thus expresses: "Christ was made sin for us, that is, a sacrifice for sin. For, in the law, the sacrifices which are offered for sins, are called sins. Hence Christ is called sin, because he was offered for sin.—He hath blotted out all sin, original and actual; hath fulfilled all righteousness, and opened the kingdom of heaven.—By one offering he perfects forever; for to the end of the world, that victim will be sufficient for the cleansing of all his people. If they sin a thousand times, they need no other Saviour, because this suffices for all things, and cleanses every conscience from sin." I need not say of a man so holy and upright, that he meant not to encourage sin, while he magnifies the savour of divine peace, through the blood of Christ, which his own conscience had experienced.

"Though; all who were to be saved could not be present when Christ made that redemption, yet so great was the virtue of that death, that its effects are extended to those who are absent or remote, in regard to place and time."

Hear how divinely he speaks of the Holy Spirit and his operations. "The Holy Spirit is evidently declared to be God; because, unless he were God, he would not have a temple. He breathed on them, and said unto them, receive ye the Holy Ghost." As if he had said: As ye perceive this breath,—by which I intimate to you the Holy Spirit, as spiritual objects are intimated by sensible things,—to proceed from my body, so know that the Holy Spirit proceeds from my Person, even from the secret of my Deity." An interpretation worthy of him, who confuted the Greeks in the article of the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son. Indeed every precious fundamental of Christianity appears in his writings.

Remove the rubbish of superstition, and view the inward man; and you see in Anselm all that is vital and essential in godliness. Nor is he content with orthodoxy of sentiment: let us hear how he pants after God, and learn from him to apply, by prayer, for the power of the doctrine which we profess. "Draw me, Lord, into thy love. As thy creature I am thine altogether; make me to be so in love. See, Lord, before thee is my heart; it struggles; but, of itself, it can effect nothing. Do thou what it cannot do. Admit me into the secret chamber of thy love. I ask, I seek, I knock. Thou, who causest me to ask, cause me to receive. Thou givest me to seek, give me to find. Thou teachest me to knock, open to me knocking. To whom dost thou give, if thou deniest him who asketh? Who finds, if he that seeks is disappointed? To whom dost thou open, if thou shuttest to him that knocks? What dost thou give to him, who prays not, if thou deniest thy love to him who prays? From thee I have the desire: O, may I have the fruition! Stick close to him; stick close, unfortunately, my soul." Let this suffice as a specimen of those groanings which cannot be uttered, of which the breast of Anselm was conscious, and which, in every age of the Church, have been known by the real people of God. These groanings are too much neglected even where they are not altogether contemned among men; but they are delightful in the ears of the heavenly host, and inferior only in harmony to the praises of just men made perfect.

This holy personage appears, from his comments on the 5th, 6th, and 7th Chapters to the Romans, to have understood the right use of the Law and the Gospel; the power and pollution of indwelling sin; its augmentation in the heart from the irritation of the law which forbids evil; and the real and solid relief from guilt, by the grace of Jesus Christ. These subjects are well understood, that is, sufficiently for all practical purposes, even by persons who have no pretensions to skill in languages or criticism: provided they have felt the lost condition of fallen man, and have been taught by the Spirit of God, in an effectual manner, to apply the medicine of the Gospel: whereas they are altogether hidden from the wise

* On 2 Cor. v.

† Heb. x.

‡ B. II. Cae homo, c. 16.

§ On 1 Cor. vi.

|| De processu Spiritus.

* De Meditat. esp. 7.

† Romans viii. 28.

and prudent of this world;* from men, who may possess much learning and acuteness, and who trust in the strength of their own knowledge and acquisitions; but whose hearts have never been truly humbled, or opened; to the reception of spiritual knowledge. The Apostle of the Gentiles was divinely commissioned to explain the important points; and I find Anselm to have known them experimentally; but, let it suffice just to have mentioned these things in this place. They have been copiously illustrated by many writers since the Reformation. So various, however, and so abundant was the knowledge of Anselm in the divine life, that he wrote with no less precision on practical, than on mysterious subjects. Observe, for instance, how justly he describes the evil of rash judgment.† “There are two cases in which we ought to guard against rash judgment, first, when the intention of him, whom we are disposed to blame, is uncertain; secondly, when it is uncertain how the person will turn out in **THE END**, who is the present object of censure. A person, for instance, refuses to fast, complaining of his bodily infirmities; if you, disbelieving him, impute his refusal to a spirit of intemperance, you are guilty of the sin of rash judgment. Moreover, though his gluttony be unquestionably evident, yet if you censure him, as if his recovery to holiness were impossible, you are guilty of censoriousness. Let us not then censure things which are **DUBIOUS**, as if they were **CERTAIN**; nor reprehend even **MANIFEST** evils in such a manner, as to represent them absolutely **INCURABLE**. Of uncertain things, those are most prone to judge rashly who take more delight in inveighing against what is amiss than in correcting it; and the vice of censoriousness itself may be traced up either to pride or to envy.”

On the awful subject of predestination his views are similar to those of Augustine. Suffice it to quote a single sentence. “It cannot be investigated why God comes to this man in the way of mercy, to that in the way of justice. For no creature can decide why he hath mercy on this person, rather than on that.”§

In his comments on the fifth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, he beautifully illustrates the all-important doctrine of justification by faith in Christ; on

which subject it may suffice to produce a single quotation from one of his systematical treatises.* “If, as it is evident, the heavenly city must receive its complete number from the human race in addition to the angels who fell not, and if this be impossible without a satisfaction made to the divine Justice, if God alone can make this satisfaction, if man is bound in justice to make it, it follows that the Saviour must be God-man.” So clearly were the essentials of salvation discerned, in one of the darkest periods of the Church: and there is not an humble soul, in any age, who seeks out the works of the Lord with admiration and delight, but he will join with the pious archbishop in his meditation. “The wicked sins, and the just is punished; the impious offends, and the pious is condemned; what the servant perpetrates, the master compensates; in fine, the evil which man commits, of that evil Christ endures the punishment.”† It would carry me too far to transcribe all his devout reflections and meditations on these subjects. One remark, however, which glances at the great corruption of doctrine, that originated from the mistaken philosophy of free-will,‡ should not be omitted. “If natural possibility by free-will, as the wise of this world say, be sufficient unto salvation, both for knowledge and for practice, then Christ is dead in vain, and his cross is of none effect. But so surely as human salvation depends on the cross, so surely is that secular wisdom convicted of folly, which knows not the virtue of the cross, and substitutes a phantom of human merit and ability in its room.”§

“We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery,” says St. Paul. The real doctrine of salvation needs, therefore, a stronger light than the world, weak and distempered in discernment as it is by

* *Cur Deus homo*, B. 2. C. 6. † *B. Meditat.*

‡ I have used the term **FREE-WILL** in this, and in some other places, in compliance with custom, though the expression leads to a confusion of ideas on the subject. It is as absurd to talk of the freedom of the will, as of the freedom of liberty; for, we can have no other rational idea of freedom in men's actions, but that of their being **VOLUNTARY**. If men act voluntarily, they act freely; responsibility is attached to what is **VOLUNTARY**, provided the subject be of sound understanding. When men do as they please, they are answerable for their conduct. This is a simple state of the case.—See *Locke's Essay on Hum. Under.* and *Edwards on Free-will.* § On 1 Cor. i.

* 1 Corin. i. 19.
O n Rom. xiv.

† Acts xvi. 14.
§ *Idem*. xi.

sin, can endure. Hence it always appears foolish to the natural man. Are we to wonder, therefore, that men of secular wisdom should despise it? That they should call the ideas of St. Paul, which Anselm illustrates, jejune, systematical, abstruse, unintelligible? That they should pronounce the Christian experience, which has these ideas for its basis, illusory, fanatical, and visionary? There have not been wanting, however, men of sound intellect and of solid learning, in every age, who have found the Gospel of Christ to be the power of God to salvation. Anselm was one of these. Amidst the gloom of superstition with which he was surrounded, he was yet enabled to describe, and vindicate every fundamental of evangelical doctrine: though a papist, he appeals to the Scriptures; he expounds them, by opening the plain, grammatical sense of St. Paul; and it behoves men, who call themselves Protestants, or who boast of the superior light of this age, to confute his arguments, or at least to own that they do not believe the Scriptures to be divine. If original sin be a true doctrine, it is to be expected, that men leaning to their own understanding would reject the doctrine of the remedy for a disease which they do not feel. If the fever of pride have caused men to lose all sense of their fallen condition, ought their reasonings to be regarded by those who feel what that condition is, and to what a state of misery sin has reduced them? If human powers, by the natural exertion of the will, exclusively of grace, be indeed sufficient to guide men into the way of salvation, then the principle of effectual grace through the mediation of Christ, and by the influence of the Holy Spirit, is doubtless unnecessary. Let experience therefore decide by the fruits. Schemes and theories of doctrine, either wholly or partly subversive of all ideas of grace, have long been patronized by persons of great celebrity in the Christian world. What have these schemes and theories done for mankind? Who, among these philosophers, can be compared, I will not say with many Protestant divines, but even with Anselm, who lived, under a cloud of unpositioned disadvantages, in humility, sincerity, piety, charity, and heavenly-mindedness? It is allowed, even by his enemies, that his life was to the right; and all the true holiness of practice which has appeared in the world,

has ever originated from such doctrines as he professed. What has been the consequence of doctrines grafted on human merit and ability, but an inundation of vice and wickedness? We have lived, indeed, to see this consequence exhibited in full perfection in France. Since Christian ideas were almost exploded there, that country has been one vast theatre of all that is execrable among men. Even the military success of those infidels has only propagated misery; and their triumphs, like those of Satan, while they multiply the calamities of others, add only a fresh accumulation to their own. Is it the same thing to forbid crimes, as to prevent them, ye innovators without discernment? Is it the same thing to despise the wisdom of antiquity, as to understand it, ye philosophers without learning?

To those then who will not lend a patient ear to Christian doctrine, we say it is divine; it has proved itself so to be in every age; the proofs of it lie open before you, examine and confute if you can. And among these proofs we adduce one of no mean importance, namely, that the Gospel stands recommended as the medicine of our nature by its holy effects. However you may dislike in its principles, you must own, if at all attentive to matter of fact, that it teaches men in real practice to live soberly, righteously, and godly; and that the farther men remove from its system in their views of religion, the more rampant do they grow in wickedness and immorality.

Reflections of this sort should teach men to inquire, with serious and humble reverence, both into the nature and evidences of Christianity; and persons who feel at all the force of these, or similar observations, will find it their duty to pray devoutly for the divine influence. In this spirit of devotion Anselm excelled; and a few quotations tending to illustrate it shall close this article. There were some others in the eleventh century

* The innovators here alluded to were continually, in words, forbidding crimes, and exhorting citizens to be orderly, &c.; while, in fact, they taught them to hate and despise the true preventions of crimes, viz. an effective government, a strong police, and, above all, the doctrine of the eternal punishments of the wicked. All this time the multiplication of the most flagitious enormities was forming a sea without a shore, which at length swallowed up the preachers themselves. Such are the effects of chimerical philosophy, and of the contempt of ANCIENT wisdom.

who lived and who wrote in a similar taste; but his eminent superiority over them all will justify me in omitting the account of their works.*

He, who in the following manner, breathes out his soul in prayer, through the Intercessor and Mediator between God and man, and so seriously rejects the hope of any other advocate than the Son of God, could not really confide in the Virgin Mary, or any saint or angel, but must have rested in Christ alone, however difficult it may be to explain the consistency of his sentiments with the fashionable superstitions of the times, the infection of which he by no means escaped entirely.

"Thus, Father Almighty, I implore thee by the love of thy Almighty Son; bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks to thy name: Free me from the bonds of sin; I ask this of thee by the only co-eternal Son: and by the intercession of thy dearly beloved Son who sitteth at thy right hand, graciously restore to life a wretch, over whom, through his own demerits, the sentence of death impends. To what other intercessor I can have recourse, I know not, except to Him who is the propitiation for our sins.† That the only begotten Son should undertake to intercede for me with the eternal Father, demonstrates him to be man; and that he should succeed in his intercession, shows that the human nature is taken into union with the Majesty of the Deity."‡

* It may, perhaps, be not improper to mention Bruno, the founder of the severe order of Carthusians. He was born at Cologne, was chancellor of the diocese of Rheims, and doctor of divinity there. He with two other canons prosecuted Manasses, archbishop of Cologne, for simony, in 1077. Manasses, in a rage, broke open and plundered the houses of the canons, and sold their prebends. He was, however, legally deposed. Bruno was offered the vacant archbishopric, but preferred a state of solitude. He is said, also, to have refused the archbishopric of Reggio. Notwithstanding the uncommon austerities of the order, which he instituted, he was obliged to attend Pope Urban II. formerly his scholar at Rheims. He was learned in Greek and Hebrew, and in the writings of the fathers, particularly Ambrose and Augustine; he followed the system of the latter concerning grace: wrote on the Psalter and St. Paul's Epistles; and seems to have been unquestionably pious and heavenly-minded. See Butler, Vol. X.

† De Vestiment.

‡ Rom. ch. viii.

He addresses the Son of God as "the Redeemer of captives, the Saviour of the lost, the hope of exiles, the strength of the distressed, the enlarger of the enslaved spirit, the sweet solace and refreshment of the mournful soul, the crown of conquerors, the only reward and joy of all the citizens of heaven, the copious source of all grace."*

The Holy Spirit he thus addresses in the same treatise. "Thee, Holy Spirit, I implore, if through my weakness I have a very imperfect understanding of the truth of thy Majesty, and if through the concupiscence of sinful nature, I have neglected to obey the Lord's precepts when understood, that thou wouldst condescend to enlighten me with thy visitation, that through thee, whom I have called upon as my succour, in the dangerous ocean of life, I may, without shipwreck, arrive at the shore of a blessed immortality."

Could the pious spirit, who believes and longs for the rest which remains for the people of God, express its most ardent breathings in language more adapted to her frame than the following! "Hasten the time, my Saviour and my God, when what I now believe I may see with eyes uncovered; what I now hope and reverence at a distance, I may apprehend; what I now desire, according to the measure of my strength, I may affectionately embrace in the arms of my soul, and that I may be wholly absorbed in the abyss of thy love!"†

After having uttered many petitions,‡ he says, "I have asked many good things, my Creator, though I have deserved many evils. Not only I have no claim on thee for these good things, but I have merited exquisite punishments. But the case of publicans, harlots, and robbers, in a moment snatched from the jaws of the enemy, and received in the bosom of the Shepherd, animates my soul with a cheering hope."

With so intuitive a glance of Christian faith does he console his soul!—It is in the same way that divine mercy is apprehended by all humble and penitent spirits. The person of Christ, and the doctrine of justification by him alone, are the objects and supports of confidence in God.

* Spec. Sermo Evang. C. 19.

† Spec. Sermo Evang. C. 18.

‡ B. Medit.







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